

THE BOOK OF ACTS

A Bible Student's Commentary
by
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In concert with dedicated Bible students
choosing to be a part of this work and
to whom it is dedicated.

This study, as in all my work, is subject to revision as more is learned

THE BOOK OF ACTS

Chapter one

Introduction

In volume II of Luke's two-part work¹, he opens this book with a reference to his first work - "The Book of Luke". His motive for writing this book is two fold. The first motive stems from the story of Jesus' birth, life, ministry, death and resurrection having taken on legends of mythic proportions and it was hard to separate fact from fiction. So Luke seeks to clear it up. This is evidenced by both Luke's introduction in his first document and by the numerous pseudepigraphical narratives appearing in the first century that have now been uncovered. Addressing Theophilus² in his first work Luke writes,

"Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write *it* out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught (Luke 1:1-4).

So Luke is out to "get the facts" so that "the many" authors might be sifted for accuracy and truth.

The second motive is personal. In the above statement, Luke notes that he had heard the stories second hand, and had apparently come to faith as a result. No doubt his travels with the Apostle Paul as well as his face to face meetings with many of the original disciples and the family members of Jesus had a forceful impact. He uses the term "us" or "we" in his narrative showing his presence as well as his closeness to many key leaders and disciples.

It is likely that he gathered information along the way but set it down in print prior to Paul's execution in Rome (according to tradition) around 64-68 A.D. In fact Paul's arrest in Jerusalem (Acts 21:15-36), and subsequent confinement for two years, gave Luke, who was with Paul most of the time, opportunity to glean inside information from everyone he could regarding Jesus. For example, based on his gospel, it is clear he had personal insight into information only Mary (Jesus' mother) could have known.

Paul called him the "beloved physician" in Colossians 4:14 and in both volumes of his work, one can find Luke using medical terms to describe certain situations, where Mark, Matthew or John use common terms.

In a careful reading of his work, Luke is aware of some differences he is hearing in the stories. So,

¹ The first work being the "Gospel of Luke"

² The name "Theophilus" is thought by some not to be an individual, but a designation for those who "love God and desire to know the truth". The fact that the book, rather than kept in a private collection, was copied and widely distributed lends weight to this theory. On the other hand, the address as "most excellent Theophilus" seems to be chosen for a real person. This salutation is used in 23:26; 24:3; and 26:25 to address dignitaries. Theophilus may well have been a Jew (See: comment on 1:12).

in those cases, he noted only a general rather than specific description or account of the event. On the other hand, when he is absolutely sure of the details, he includes them, such as the political setting and personalities involved. Further, though there is a focus on Paul's ministry in Acts, Luke's intent was to give a history of the beginnings of the church (the spread of Christianity) and not strictly the life of Paul. He does end up accompanying Paul from the middle of Paul's second journey and onward. He gleans much information from Paul and his companions. But not all of Paul's activities are included. We gain much more about Paul himself from his letters. The apostleship and work of Apollos, for example, is only sketched when it is germane to Luke's narrative, but Apollos had an extensive work himself that impacted the Mediterranean area. In addition, there is little about Paul's fourth journey though considerable evidence supports this probability. And there is no account of his death, or that of Peter or of any of the apostles. His goal in reporting the spread of Christianity and its impact is adequately described in the narrative and these other details are unnecessary in accomplishing that goal.

As he begins volume II, the book we call "The Acts of the Apostles", he continues his narrative from Volume I. In the ancient church, the books were referred to as Luke-Acts, one volume. So he writes in:

1:1-3

1: "The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach, 2: until the day when He was taken up *to heaven*, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen. 3: To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over *a period of forty days* and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:1-3).

1: Luke may be suggesting by his wording that Jesus' ministry did not end at the ascension but continued on in the lives of the apostles and the early church. Jesus' physical-earthly ministry is only the beginning of what Jesus was doing and teaching. It would be The Holy Spirit who continued His work in the lives of His redeemed people.

2: Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension can be seen as the elements of salvation for each believer. His death pays the sin debt we are unable to pay - which is death, His resurrection demonstrates and provides the source of life for every believer and His ascension makes it permanent.

3: Jesus was crucified and risen during Passover and His ascension occurred forty days thence. Jesus' resurrection, Luke notes, was accompanied by many "convincing proofs" mostly consisting of post-resurrection appearances. No doubt this astounding event had the disciples reeling and many, such as Thomas, would not be convinced without more to go on than someone's word.

Again, as in the study of the "Life and Teachings of Christ According To The Gospels",³ the foundation of everything Jesus taught and did related to the kingdom of God. During these days, it is likely that Jesus reviewed all that He had done and taught and showed the disciples how it related to the overall plan for God's kingdom and how much His teaching about Himself and God's redemptive plan had come to pass. Perhaps much of the content of each Gospel writer's account was derived from this time of review and teaching. (See Luke 24:27, 45-47)

³ See this author's work so entitled.

1:4-9

4: "Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," *He said*, "you heard of from Me; 5: for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." 6: So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" 7: He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; 8: but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." 9: And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

4-5: Luke reiterates his closing of the first volume (Luke 24:13-53). Jesus remained with His disciples (the eleven "apostles" - verse 2) but ultimately more than the eleven for some forty days after His resurrection, and His ascension occurred roughly one week before Pentecost. During this time, He not only convinced some doubters and skeptics that He had indeed risen, but prepared them for what was to come. He had His final meeting with them on the Mount of Olives, between Jerusalem and Bethany (Luke 19:28-29, 37) near the place He began the triumphal entry. One is able to see the Temple Mount from there. First they were to gather together and await the promise of the Father, the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" (See John 14:26; 15:26-27; 16:12-13).

6: They had no idea what this meant, but on their minds was still the matter of the traditional "Messianic" power play. It is understandable that the expectation was present now that Jesus had appeared with such power. Seeing the Temple Mount from the Mount of Olives could not but help bring to mind all of Zechariah 14. Verse 4 states, for example, "In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south." But what the disciples didn't realize was that the message of redemption needed to be proclaimed, so people would have the opportunity to exercise their faith in Jesus and receive the spiritual, eternal benefits of Jesus' work. This was not immediately understood by His followers, but was evident in the Old Testament (Isaiah 9:1-7; 42:6-9; 49:6 etc.).

The work of redemption is one thing, but the opportunity for faith in it is another. This is explained in the succeeding verses.

7-8: Verse 7 is another statement informing Jesus' disciples that it is not for them to know the times or epochs of the culmination of all things as God has planned (See also: Matthew 24:36; 24:42; Mark 13:32-33; I Thessalonians 5:1 ff.). These statements stand firm in the face of so many "scholars" who believe they have figured it out or are able to figure it out. Rather than admit their premises and theologies are faulty, they simply set new dates. 8: Instead, the goal is to be witnesses for Jesus worldwide empowered of the Holy Spirit.

9: He rose and was enveloped by a cloud.

1:10-11

10: "And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. 11: They also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."

10: His ascension was another startling, unexpected event. The word "intently" means they were fixated on the sight. One can imagine their wonder and their thoughts. From the context they may have thought, "Is He gone forever?" "Is He ever going to return?" "What about Zechariah's prophecy?" Their difficulty was understandable so God sent two "men" to explain it to them.

11: The two "men" explained that Jesus would also return in a cloud as He had departed. This is consistent with Jesus' own words in Matthew 24:30, "And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory." Luke again employs the same description of the "two men" as he does in his Gospel (24:4) and they seem to have the same manner of speaking there as here.

1:12-26

12: Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. 13: When they had entered *the city*, they went up to the upper room where they were staying; that is, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James *the son* of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas *the son* of James. 14: These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with *the women*, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers. 15: At this time Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren (a gathering of about one hundred and twenty persons was there together), and said, 16: "Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. 17: "For he was counted among us and received his share in this ministry." 18: (Now this man acquired a field with the price of his wickedness, and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his intestines gushed out. 19: And it became known to all who were living in Jerusalem; so that in their own language that field was called Hakeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) 20: "For it is written in the book of Psalms, 'LET HIS HOMESTEAD BE MADE DESOLATE, AND LET NO ONE DWELL IN IT'; and, 'LET ANOTHER MAN TAKE HIS OFFICE.' 21: "Therefore it is necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us—22: beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us--one of these *must* become a witness with us of His resurrection." 23: So they put forward two men, Joseph called Barsabbas (who was also called Justus), and Matthias. 24: And they prayed and said, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all men, show which one of these two You have chosen 25: to occupy this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place." 26: And they drew lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.

12: "A Sabbath days journey" is 2000 cubits to the ancient Hebrew mind. It was determined as the limit one could travel on the Sabbath by rabbinical reasoning based on Exodus 16:29; Numbers 35:5; Joshua 3:4; and a number of other passages. Telling Theophilus about the journey using this term strongly suggests that Theophilus was a Jew. The distance was about 3/5 of a mile or 1056 yards. A quarter mile is 880 yards and 3/4 of a mile is 1320 yards.

13: Implies that more than the eleven were gathered at Olivet as it names those of the crowd who were staying (or residing temporarily) in the upper room. All had entered the city but only the named were staying in the upper room. It looks like they gathered in the main room and/or the courtyard of the house when they all came together.

14: "All with one mind". The Greek here indicates that they were all passionately and fervently stirred up over something. Luke doesn't specify what this is but the context may suggest that Jesus' words commissioning them to proclaim the gospel to the world apparently caused them to realize that there were only eleven remaining to do this. The women, including all of Jesus' family, and especially His brothers were there, along with those who had closely followed Jesus and His ministry from the beginning. This means that James, formerly a severe critic and skeptic, was now convinced of Jesus' Messiahship. As Paul wrote later, "...and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James...(I Corinthians 15:5-7)

It is not necessary to think that this all occurred in the "upper room" or even that they were all together at this time.

15: The 120. From the gospels, it is clear that the followers of Jesus were more numerous than first thought. For example in Luke 24:13-33, Cleopas states very clearly to the resurrected Jesus (as they traveled to Emmaus) that he and his companion were with the disciples in the closed room when Jesus appeared to them after His resurrection. They said, "But also some women among us amazed us. when they were at the tomb early in the morning, and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision (see note on 10:3) of angels who said that He was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see." Note Cleopas use of the word "us". 120 is three times forty, and in Jewish numerology, this means that everyone who was supposed to be there was there and in Luke's notes, he says "about 120". At this point in the narrative, they had all gathered together in one place, in a "house" somewhere in the city or in the same house which hosted the eleven in the "upper room".

16-17: These scriptures are, Psalm 69:25; and 109:8 (note verse 20). No doubt Jesus explained this to His disciples during the forty day ministry following His resurrection.

18-20: An editorial comment by Luke. Indirectly Judas bought his own burial plot (see: Matthew 27:3-10). Although Matthew reports that Judas hanged himself, it is likely that when he either fell from decay or was cut down, his body split apart. Luke uses terms in verse 18 describing Judas' "falling headlong" and "bursting open" that are not used elsewhere in the New Testament. This reveals his medical perspective once again. Judas' gruesome suicide and his betrayal is remembered in the naming of the burial field "Hakeldama", field of blood. Judas blood money purchased the field.

21-23: Based on Psalm 109:8, Peter decided to fulfill this by selecting another to fill Judas' place. The qualifications were that this nominee had to have been with them from the beginning of John's baptizing ministry and be a witness to the resurrection of Jesus. So two were put forth, Joseph called Barsabbas (or Justus) and Matthias. This reiterates the fact that Jesus' followers from the beginning were more numerous than just the twelve.

24-26: After they prayed, they wished God to have His choice, so they cast lots. The selected lot

fell to Matthias. There is no mention of either of them again in the Scriptures, nor of casting lots. Once the Holy Spirit filled them on Pentecost, His guidance was understood by those submitted to Him.

“Casting lots” was a common practice stemming from ancient times. The word “lot” means to “break”, “divide”, “separate”, (one from another) and “casting lots” was, conversely, used to apportion, decide, or assign someone or something to a specific use or purpose. The item or items used for this purpose were (in Israel) small rough stones with several flat sides (probably from two to four sides) allowing them to come to rest on one side thus displaying an “up” side from which a reading could be determined. The number of stones is unknown but the Urim and Thummin numbered twelve and when the Ephod was used for an inquiry (I Samuel 23:9-12; 30:7-8 for example) it appears as if the stones indicating the answer lit up or reflected light in some way. These stones had markings on them or had faces of different colors by which the reading could be drawn. The markings may have been the symbols for each tribe, one on each stone. The answer was either “yes”, or no. The answer may have come in form of light or no light, light indicating “yes”.

It is possible that twelve stones were used in “casting lots” with light sides and dark sides or with tribal markings on them. They were placed in a bag and then thrown down upon a cloth on a flat surface. The idea in casting lots was to give God His choice in the matter. For example, Proverbs 16:33 (among other places) notes: “The lot is cast into the lap (or midst), But its every decision is from the LORD.” No remnants, pictures or samples of these “lots” are extant today.

In Acts 1:26 this operation is translated “drawing lots”, but the word “didomi” has a variety of meanings and the lots were probably “cast”. The casting of lots was not limited to the Jews. Many other cultures either cast some form of lot such as a stone or a stick or drew sticks from a bag. For example, in all four gospels, the Roman soldiers at Jesus’ crucifixion cast lots for His garment, “And when they had crucified Him, they divided up His garments among themselves by casting lots” (Matthew 27:35).

Chapter two

2:1-4

1: “When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2: And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3: And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. 4: And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

1: “Day of Pentecost” simply means in the Greek “Day of fifty” or “Fiftieth Day”. It indicates fifty days after Passover and this day is called “The Feast of Weeks” or fifty days after the waving of the barley sheaf during Passover (Leviticus 23:9-21):

“Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'When you enter the land which I am going to give to you and reap its harvest, then you shall bring in the sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest. 'He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD for you to be accepted; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it. 'Now on the

day when you wave the sheaf, you shall offer a male lamb one year old without defect for a burnt offering to the LORD. 'Its grain offering shall then be two-tenths *of an ephah* of fine flour mixed with oil, an offering by fire to the LORD *for* a soothing aroma, with its drink offering, a fourth of a hin of wine. 'Until this same day, until you have brought in the offering of your God, you shall eat neither bread nor roasted grain nor new growth. It is to be a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwelling places.

'You shall also count for yourselves from the day after the sabbath, from the day when you brought in the sheaf of the wave offering; there shall be seven complete sabbaths. 'You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh sabbath; then you shall present a new grain offering to the LORD. 'You shall bring in from your dwelling places two *loaves* of bread for a wave offering, made of two-tenths *of an ephah*; they shall be of a fine flour, baked with leaven as first fruits to the LORD. 'Along with the bread you shall present seven one year old male lambs without defect, and a bull of the herd and two rams; they are to be a burnt offering to the LORD, with their grain offering and their drink offerings, an offering by fire of a soothing aroma to the LORD. 'You shall also offer one male goat for a sin offering and two male lambs one year old for a sacrifice of peace offerings. 'The priest shall then wave them with the bread of the first fruits for a wave offering with two lambs before the LORD; they are to be holy to the LORD for the priest. 'On this same day you shall make a proclamation as well; you are to have a holy convocation. You shall do no laborious work. It is to be a perpetual statute in all your dwelling places throughout your generations.’

“Pentecost” then, marked the beginning of the offering of “First Fruits” of the harvest. The feast of Passover is also called the “Feast of Redemption” and concludes with this celebration of first fruits in which all the family and the servants participate (Deuteronomy 16:10). Another name for this feast is the “ingathering” (Exodus 23:16). In Jewish tradition, this is also the time when the Law was delivered from Mount Sinai by God to Moses. On this Pentecost, the “first fruits” were people who came to faith that very day. The church was born and the “ingathering” of the harvest has continued ever since. The rule of The Law was abolished and the rule of The Spirit established. (See: II Corinthians, chapter 3)

In Acts chapter two, the day was marked by 120 (or so) people gathered together in one “place” awaiting what Jesus had promised them. Whether they knew it would occur on Pentecost or not is unknown, but “all together in one *place*” (italics mine as the word “place” is supplied by the translators) could mean that they were in one accord or of one mind or all anticipating something together. They were sitting down on the premises when the noise began. Likely they had just finished eating some food and were quietly relaxing, perhaps talking about the holiday and what to do next. It seems clear that as they had spent these days in contemplation, fellowship and prayer, that none of them were actually imbued with the fervency of life that inflames faith to boldness and action. The “life of Christ” was not yet in them. They had yet to experience “Christ in them, the hope of glory”. They were still simple folks waiting for God to do something. They were exercising a human, initial faith, but not the relationship essential to “walking in faith”.

2: “From heaven” – from outside or from the sky where it is perceived the wind blows. It was the noise, not a wind that filled the house. Jesus described the Spirit to Nicodemus in similar terms when He taught, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. "Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is

going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit" (John 3:5-8). The "breath" of God is seen as that which imparts life (Genesis 2:7; Ezekiel 37:9-14). After His resurrection, "Jesus said to them again, 'Peace *be* with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.' And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:21-22). These "120" became the "first fruits" of Pentecost, in the spiritual, fulfilling, and eternal sense.

3: These were not tongues of fire, but tongues "as of fire" distributing themselves to each one gathered and resting (or "sat") on them (their heads?). This was an image of what each one was receiving, that is a new and different tongue as a specific sign that The Holy Spirit was doing something unique and special. Spiritual life was being born.

4: Probably all 120, but the twelve for sure (note: verse 14). Being "filled with The Holy Spirit" was, prior to this, an individual or limited corporate event – that is, God apparently used one or more individuals for a special purpose at a special time and then the power vacated the individual. (See: Numbers 11:24-29; Judges 3:10, 6:34; etc, I Sam. 10:6 et. al.) Here it is corporate and permanent for the first time.

They began to "speak with other tongues", clearly other known languages as the "Spirit gave them utterance" – that is, this was not a permanent ability they now possessed and could exercise at any time.⁴ "Utterance" (αποφθεγγομαι) the urge to speak but not necessarily the exact words. However, Jesus did note in Matthew 10:17-20, "But beware of men, for they will hand you over to *the* courts and scourge you in their synagogues; and you will even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. "But when they hand you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say; for it will be given you in that hour what you are to say. "For it is not you who speak, but *it is* the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you."

2:5-11

5: "Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. 6: And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language. 7: They were amazed and astonished, saying, "Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8: "And how is it that we each hear *them* in our own language to which we were born? 9: "Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10: Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11: Cretans and Arabs--we hear them in our *own* tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God."

5: "Every nation under heaven" is a hyperbole. Similar hyperboles are found in John 21:25, Matthew 19:24, Mark 4:31. This crowd was due to the pilgrimage to Jerusalem many took at Passover. Since this may only happen for them once in a lifetime, they stayed through the entire Feast of Weeks until the harvest sacrifice and celebration at Pentecost were complete. The pilgrimage could have amassed over a million people in Jerusalem and the surrounding area.

6-11: The sound of men speaking with tongues of foreign nations. The bewilderment occurred because the men speaking were uneducated Galileans and the visitors were not just hearing the

⁴ See this author's work entitled, "A Brief Word Study Concerning The Gifts Of The Holy Spirit"

languages of the empire, Latin, Greek, or even Aramaic, but the regional and local dialects of their homelands.

2:12-13

12: “And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, ‘What does this mean?’ 13: But others were mocking and saying, ‘They are full of sweet wine.’”

12: Luke describes their state using three words, “bewilderment” (συγχεω, verse 6), “amazement” (εξιστυμι) and “great perplexity” (διαπορευω). The first word indicates a confounding and disorder of the mind. The second indicates being “beside oneself” or to be without one’s wits, and the third indicates the conclusion that one is witnessing the impossible and doubt is present. “What does this mean?” uses words describing the lack of understanding on the part of the inquirers.

13: The bewilderment was so great that the onlookers tried to offer a reason. This shows the reluctance to believe it is a miracle or a work of God. “Mocking” indicates a severe prejudicial derision, not in humor at all. “Sweet (new) wine” was especially intoxicating and was a relatively fresh product high in glucose. In fact, the word used is “glucose” in the Greek.

2:14-15

14: “But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: “Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give heed to my words.
15: “For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is *only* the third hour of the day;”

14: Peter and the other eleven push out to the crowd that had gathered and raises his voice to address them, calling for their attention.

15: He explains that it is but 9:00 A.M. and way too early to be drinking.

Acts 2:16-21, “but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: 17: 'AND IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAYS,' God says, 'THAT I WILL POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT ON ALL MANKIND; AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY, AND YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS, AND YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS; 18: EVEN ON MY BONDSLAVES, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN, I WILL IN THOSE DAYS POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT And they shall prophesy. 19: 'AND I WILL GRANT WONDERS IN THE SKY ABOVE AND SIGNS ON THE EARTH BELOW, BLOOD, AND FIRE, AND VAPOR OF SMOKE. 20: 'THE SUN WILL BE TURNED INTO DARKNESS AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD, BEFORE THE GREAT AND GLORIOUS DAY OF THE LORD SHALL COME. 21: 'AND IT SHALL BE THAT EVERYONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.'

16ff.: Did Peter have this memorized? Possibly, as the Messianic theme and the “last days” were at the top of every Jew’s expectation, hope and dream. (See comment on 2:4 about the Spirit giving “utterance”). For example, the disciples were always inquiring of Jesus about these things. Joel’s little (three chapter) prophecy is devoted entirely to this theme as a part of the description of the coming “Great and Terrible (Glorious) Day of The Lord” when God’s people will be avenged and

God will pour out His wrath on the unrepentant nations. Peter quotes only Joel 2:28-32. However, in no version are the words “in the last days” found. Either Peter or Luke changes Joel’s words “It will come to pass after this”... to this phrase. Joel’s book does, however, include this theme (1:2, 2:29, 3:1) and the alteration is justifiable. There are some other differences with the Hebrew text as well and this may be attributed to Peter’s recollection, the version Luke quoted from (LXX), or the way it was quoted to Luke. Peter concludes with verse 32, an invitation to faith. He then goes on to explain how this prophecy came to be fulfilled.

2:22-32

22:"Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—23: this *Man*, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death. 24: "But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power. 25: "For David says of Him, 'I SAW THE LORD ALWAYS IN MY PRESENCE; FOR HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND, SO THAT I WILL NOT BE SHAKEN. 26: 'THEREFORE MY HEART WAS GLAD AND MY TONGUE EXULTED; MOREOVER MY FLESH ALSO WILL LIVE IN HOPE; 27: BECAUSE YOU WILL NOT ABANDON MY SOUL TO HADES, NOR ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY. 28: 'YOU HAVE MADE KNOWN TO ME THE WAYS OF LIFE; YOU WILL MAKE ME FULL OF GLADNESS WITH YOUR PRESENCE.' 29: "Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. 30: "And so, because he was a prophet and knew that GOD HAD SWORN TO HIM WITH AN OATH TO SEAT *one* OF HIS DESCENDANTS ON HIS THRONE, 31: he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY. 32: "This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses.”

22: Joel’s prophecy began its fulfillment when Jesus began His ministry. Peter makes it clear that they need not be confused or ignorant about to whom he is now referring. He refers to Jesus as “a man” in verse 22 but amplifies it later to “Lord and Messiah (Christ)” in verse 36. The astounding boldness of Peter (and the rest) can only be attributed to the power of The Holy Spirit as Jesus said (1:8). The Holy Spirit is to give power for the purpose of witnessing. Peter’s transformation is due solely to the working of the Spirit.

23: Peter accuses the entire Jewish population of this deed. It is not exactly totally and solely true that the Jews caused Jesus to be crucified, but they were willing instruments in the deed God had intended from the beginning of time (John 3:16 et. al.). But it was a free and determined choice on the part of both the Jews and Romans to crucify Jesus. Thus Peter begins his diatribe telling them that God fulfilled His will through their evil but makes it clear that this doesn’t justify their evil.

24: Not death itself (in the flesh), but “the agony of death”, since death has no power over Jesus. Verse 24 is the initiation of a lengthy discourse on the resurrection and its importance.

25-26: Peter quotes Psalm 16:8-11a, and declares that it was Jesus of whom David was actually speaking. “My right hand” – see commentary below on verse 33.

27: “Hades”, the same as Sheol, the place of the departed, the underworld, the grave. “Holy One” – actually “pious or worshipful one”.

29: In his interpretation, Peter tells the crowd that the Psalm could not be speaking of David himself, because David’s tomb is currently present.

30: Peter grants the role of prophet to David because of his foresight in this psalm. “Therefore he became a prophet” is a more accurate translation. Then Peter quotes the essence or point of Psalm 132:11. (Based on God’s promise to David – II Samuel 7:8-17. See also Psalm 89:1-4) Matthew 22:41-46 is worth reviewing at this point.

31-32: Peter, based on David being revealed as a prophet, applies the fulfillment of Psalm 16:10 to Jesus in that He was neither abandoned nor suffered decay but instead was raised to life, an event witnessed by all those gathered together and speaking the mighty works of God in various languages.

2:33-36

33: "Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. 34: "For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: 'THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, 35: UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET.'" 36: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ--this Jesus whom you crucified."

33: “The right hand of God”. A significant image in the mind of the Jews, as it applies to both man and God. Many ancient cultures developed imagery based on the use of the right or left hand. It became common to view the right hand as generally symbolizing righteousness, power and truth while the left symbolized deception and deadliness. (See Judges 3:21; II Samuel 20:9-10 for example).

From the human point of view, the “right hand” or “right side” indicated the side or hand of blessing (Genesis 48:13-20); cleansing (Leviticus 8:23-24; 14:14, 25); strength and power (Judges 5:26; Job 40:14; Psalm 16:8); the place of honor (I Chronicles 6:39); Truth (Isaiah 44:20; Daniel 12:7; Revelation 10:5-6); fellowship (Galatians 2:9); provision or abundance (John 21:6); authority (Matthew 27:29); etc.

When it is applied to God the intensity is magnified. To the “Right Hand of God” is attributed strength, power, vengeance and protection (Exodus 15:6, 12; Psalm 16:8; 17:7; 18:35; 21:8; 74:10-11; 78:54, 139:1-10); pleasure, blessing, righteousness and loving-kindness (Genesis 48:14; Psalm 16:11; 48:9-11; 80:14-19; 121, Matthew 25:31-34ff.; Revelation 1:16-17); deliverance and redemption (Psalm 108:1-6; 109:26-31; Isaiah 41:13-14, Hebrews 1:3); creation (Psalm 102:25; Isaiah 48:12-13; 63:12); truth (Daniel 12:7; Revelation 10:5-6); honor and authority (I Kings 2:19; Psalm 45:9; Acts 5:31; Ephesians 1:19b-23); intercession, finished word of the High priest (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 8:1-2; 10:10-18; 12:1-2).

Jesus applied a reference to “the right hand of God” to Himself in Luke 22:66-71, “When it was day, the Council of elders of the people assembled, both chief priests and scribes, and they led Him away to their council *chamber*, saying, "If You are the Christ, tell us." But He said to them, "If I tell

you, you will not believe; and if I ask a question, you will not answer. "But from now on THE SON OF MAN WILL BE SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND of the power OF GOD." And they all said, "Are You the Son of God, then?" And He said to them, "Yes, I am." Then they said, "What further need do we have of testimony? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth." This was blasphemy in the ears of the Jews, and deserving of death. Of course, in Jesus' case, the statements were true and not blasphemous. Jesus called it "The Right Hand of Power" - Matthew 26:64, Mark 14:62. There are over 20 references to Jesus being at the "right hand of God" in the New Testament and each one of them indicates this place to be that of power, authority, and honor equal to that of God.

From his place at God's right hand, Jesus now has the authority to pour out the Holy Spirit upon People, a gift He received from His Father. Paul, in Ephesians 1:20 and 2:6 suggests that we as believers in Christ now reside in that place of honor and power as well.

34-35: Psalm 110 (here Peter quotes only verse one) is the most quoted passage in scripture relating to God's right hand and, in the New Testament, applied over a dozen times to Christ as the exalted sovereign, reigning in power and glory at God's right hand. Obviously Psalm 110 cannot refer to David who did not ascend into the heavens and thus must be speaking of the Messiah.

36: Peter lays the wood to the fire. The very man the house of Israel murdered was made both Lord and Messiah by God. The stark contrast between those who interpreted their own evil will as God's will and what God was actually doing is stunning.

2:37-40

37: "Now when they heard *this*, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" 38: Peter *said* to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39: "For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself." 40: And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!"

37: "They were pierced to the heart". They experienced emotionally what Jesus experienced physically during His torture and crucifixion. The shock came when they realized that they had done God's will in keeping the laws and traditions including judging "blasphemers" only to find out that all this was in direct opposition to God's will. Then, that they had killed God's Anointed One left them in despair realizing that there was no hope for them. It caused them to cry out to Peter for relief, "What shall we do"? This is the cry of those who have no hope, and in light of their capital crime, they were desperate to make amends if possible. The answer could have been in the harshest terms. But Peter was in a position to understand and empathize with both their misdirected tradition and their heartbreak and hopelessness. He himself had recently experienced such turmoil when he realized he had denied Jesus three times. Peter's answer was good news to his hearers.

38: Repent means "with the mind". It is in the imperative mood and commands one to change his entire stand on the matter at hand and begin an entirely new journey in an opposite direction regarding that particular matter. "Baptism" is immersion in water signifying the washing away of the old (and the sinful) and the beginning of a new mind, heart and walk. At that point the Holy Spirit will confirm to them their acceptance by God (see: Romans 8:11-17; Galatians 5:16-18; 24-25). Being baptized "in the name of Jesus Christ" recognizes Jesus' equal authority and place with

God. This does not contradict Jesus' command in Matthew 28:19, but only gives the baptism a distinction which separates it from that which John did or what the Jews normally understood the purpose of Baptism to be.

39-40: The promise is for two peoples, "you and your children" (Isaiah 44:3; 59:21) and to those who are "far off", a phrase indicating the Gentiles (Isaiah 57:19; Ephesians 2:11-22). In mentioning the Gentiles, Old Testament prophecy is recalled to the mind of the hearers (Isaiah 9:1-2ff.). Peter exhorts his hearers with persuasive words summarized in the point, "Be saved from this perverse generation". The Greek indicates, "Be rescued to safety from the crookedness of this humanity." Peter's newly gained knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures witnesses to the miraculous work of God's Spirit and likely to the teaching of Jesus during the forty days. Still, Peter's ability to understand and retain, compared to the Gospel accounts of his intransigence and thickness, testifies to the miraculous.

2:41-47

41: "So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. 42: They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43: Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. 44: And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; 45: and they *began* selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. 46: Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, 47: praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

41: Added to the number of believers were some 3000 people, truly a harvest fitting the holiday. (Note verse 47)

42: Verses 42-47 is Luke's summary of an extended period of time following the Day of Pentecost. "They" would include all who had come to faith during the feast and afterwards. Four things were primary in their gatherings to which they were "continually devoting themselves", (a single Greek word "προσκαρτερουντες" (proskarteroontes meaning "to be steadfast toward" or "to adhere closely"). 1. The "Apostle's teaching". This would have included the fulfillment of prophecy in the life, death burial and resurrection of Jesus, and His teachings as later written in the "Gospels". The matter of dealing with Judaism and the New Covenant was come to come later. 2. "Fellowship" is "κοινωνια" (koinonia) meaning to "share or participate in a intimate partnership". This means having a common ground and purpose for participating together in an activity. 3. "Breaking of bread" is simply taking common meals together, from which the present idea of "communion" springs. 4. "Prayer", "προσευχε" (proseuke), the act of supplication, worship and seeking guidance.

43: "awe" is "φοβος" (phobos) most often translated "fear". Perhaps due to the "wonders" "τερος" (teros - terrors) and signs "σημειον" (saymeion) coming at the hands of the apostles. Likely these may be comparable to what we read in Paul's letter in I Corinthians, chapter 12 (see footnote 1 above). Apostle – teaching missionary. Literally it is to "stand or set apart from". In the early

days, this title was applied to only the twelve and Paul (note Acts 15:23) then elders were added (Acts 16:4) and later to more than the twelve (See Romans 16:7).

44-45: Showing the unity and sharing heart of the early church. This was a volunteering sharing of goods and provisions to accommodate those who had little. As persecution began, many were refused work, driven from rented quarters or had providers arrested. Jewish families began to reject those of their own who believed and cast them from home and community. Having no provision or place to go, the early church shared together what they had in a common storehouse. Soon, many gave or sold all they for the store, and then drew from it as they had need. (Note: 4:32-5:11)

46-47: The daily life of these new believing “Christians” is described as Luke repeats the portrait with the emphasis on unity of mind in the temple (or on the temple grounds), joy, and sincerity (or singleness) of heart as they shared meals in different houses in Jerusalem. They were having a blessed time. Each day they were also praising God and their spirit was contagious among the people. Daily many were drawn to faith experiencing the exhilaration of having their sins removed being filled with the joy and power of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter three

3:1

3:1: “Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth *hour*, the hour of prayer.”

1: The word “now” indicates an event at an unnamed time, and Luke uses the word to indicate the beginning of a story which led to a major uprising⁵. Perhaps “as it happened” would fit better. It also follows and illustrates the statement by Luke in 2:43, “Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles”. They were going for prayer as the time of prayer for the Jews occurred at 3:00 P.M. In later Judaism, we know the times for prayer were 9:00 A.M., 3:00 P.M. and sunset. This may have been the practice of earlier Jews as well. As they entered the temple grounds they would pass through the “Eastern Gate” and into the court of the Gentiles. From there, each level was elevated above the previous one by sets of steps. Thus they went “up” to the temple (see diagram below).

Between the Court of the Gentiles and the succeeding courts was a wall about four and a half feet tall prohibiting Gentiles from entering the Court of Israel comprised of the court of women and court of men. To cross it meant death for any Gentile and warning inscriptions on pillars were posted around the wall. Paul alludes to this wall in Ephesians 2:11-22 as he describes the unity of all believers in Christ, the Gentiles having full access and privilege with Israel. In this wall were many openings allowing Jews to access the rest of the temple courts. From this outer court, it was eight feet up steps and through one of three gates to the Court of the women. The Eastern most entrance was the Beautiful Gate. (Excavations have shown the steps to the temple to be irregular in height and depth forcing the pilgrims to consider their own unrighteousness as they approached Holiness). From the court of the women it was another 10 feet of steps to the court of the men and

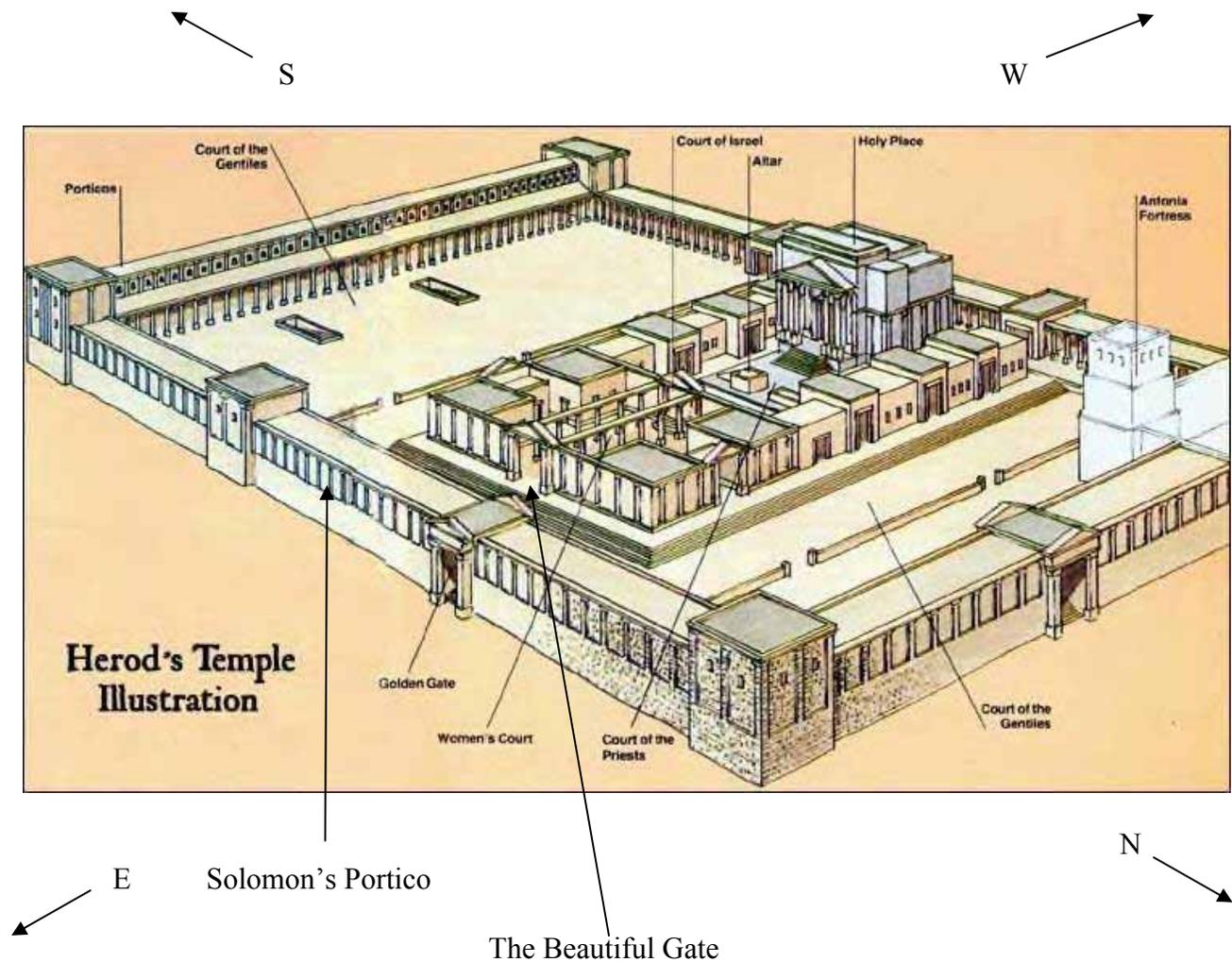
⁵ Throughout Acts, Luke uses words like “Now” to indicate a relatively lengthy or unspecified passage of time.

another three feet to the court of the priests and then another eight feet to the temple floor.

3:2:

3:2: “And a man who had been lame from his mother’s womb was being carried along, whom they used to set down every day at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, in order to beg alms of those who were entering the temple.”

2: Friends or relatives carried the man born lame in his feet, to the gate each day in order to beg for his subsistence. They likely brought him at the three busiest times⁶, and then carried him back to his residence in between. The “Beautiful” Gate no longer exists but was also called the Nicanor gate, and led from the court of the Gentiles to the court of the women on the East wall of the temple proper.⁷ It was one of three gates, as there was one on the North wall and one on the South. This eastern gate may have been sheathed in Corinthian bronze thus getting its name “beautiful”. In order to get of the court of Israel, men entering this gate would first pass through the court of Gentiles (the “outer court”) and then through the court of women where their wives would join the other women at prayer time.



⁶ The three appointed time of prayer when most of the people would approach the temple area.

⁷ From: <http://www.bible-history.com/jewishtemple>

3:3-8

3: “When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he *began* asking to receive alms. 4: But Peter, along with John, fixed his gaze on him and said, "Look at us!" 5: And he *began* to give them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. 6: But Peter said, "I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene--walk!" 7: And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up; and immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened. 8: With a leap he stood upright and *began* to walk; and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.

3-6: A simple story, yet profound. Peter and John are on the way to the temple to pray with crowds of other men and women. As it was in those days, beggars were common and often simply overlooked as the people made their way to the temple. But this beggar directs his request specifically at Peter and John as they passed by closely to him. The two of them stop - caught in the moment - and look intently at the beggar as if seeing him for the first time. One might imagine remembering, how as they traveled with Jesus, they tried to shoo the beggars and infirm away from the Master. But then were rebuked by Him as He ministered to and healed the poor and the needy. The lesson hit home this day. They have no money, but realize they have something else they can do for this beggar.

[Something else may have crossed Peter’s mind as well. Remember just a couple of weeks ago Jesus and Peter were having an intense discussion recorded in John 21:15-17:

15: So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My lambs." 16: He said to him again a second time, "Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Shepherd My sheep." 17: He said to him the third time, "Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Tend My sheep.

Jesus three fold question to Peter was a means of restoring Peter to Himself in full acceptance despite Peter's three denials earlier. When Jesus asked Peter if he loved him more “than these” Jesus was setting the stage for describing how true love for Him was expressed. The “these” are those other disciples gathered about, His sheep. The three "love" questions are more than coincidental, I think They allow Peter to receive the understanding that: 1) Jesus loved Him in spite of Peter’s previous denials and gave Peter three opportunities to respond with his statements of love Lord corresponding to his three denials, in effect negating them. 2) There is no question Peter was distressed (“grieved”) over being asked three times and realizing the apparent contradiction of saying he loved Jesus and yet denying Him thrice at Jesus’ arrest. 3) Peter's embarrassment over being asked three times and reminded of the denial did not allow Peter to express his love for Jesus in the same terms. He knew he couldn't. 4) Nonetheless, he was not rejected nor condemned by our precious Savior. Instead Peter was given the commission to carry on the work of the Lord, “to feed My sheep”.

True love for Jesus is seen in first feeding the little sheep God has given each of us. Remember Jesus said in Matthew 25,

Matthew 25:34-40, "Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are

blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 'For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.' "Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? 'And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? 'When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' "The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.'

Restored, forgiven, cleansed, loved and retained not only in the sheepfold without criticism or condemnation, but given ministry as well is how Jesus treats us ...and how we are to treat others].

6: They command the beggar to look at them. Of course he was, but in a passive way, hoping to get something from anyone passing by. So he looked at them and gave them his attention. Explaining that they had no money, Peter hastens on to command him to walk in the name (authority) of Jesus. It appears the beggar does not budge, thinking he cannot walk.

7: So Peter extends his hand grabbing the lame man's right hand and pulls him up. The lame man is raised up and then feels his feet and ankles becoming strengthened. Peter had to pull him up before he believed he was healed.

8: Leaping up he tested his ability to walk and finding himself able to do so without problem or pain and in perfect balance, he entered the temple clinging to Peter and John continuing to practice walking and leaping while praising God with great excitement and joy.

3:9-11

9: "And all the people saw him walking and praising God; 10: and they were taking note of him as being the one who used to sit at the Beautiful Gate of the temple to *beg* alms, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. 11: While he was clinging to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them at the so-called portico of Solomon, full of amazement."

9-10: Some among the crowd recognized this leaping man as the lame beggar who sat at the gate begging alms. When it hit them, the Greek describes their reaction as "filled with wonder and amazement" - meaning flooded, caught up in, or motivated to wonder and ecstasy. This means all else was excluded from their mind except this event.

11: They ran to Peter and John at "Solomon's Portico" full of "amazement" or "utterly astounded". "Solomon's Portico" was so called because it was named after, or dedicated in Solomon's name. Solomon's temple had, of course, been totally destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. This "portico" was a roofed structure or porch that ran all along the inner wall enclosing the outer court. It had columns 27 feet high and a roof of cedar. It was 45 feet wide and encompassed 3600 square feet, and there may have been more than one in the court. Many would gather here in the winter or during the hot days for shelter. Jesus once taught here (John 10:23). One arrived there after passing through the "beautiful gate".

3:12-16

12: "But when Peter saw *this*, he replied to the people, "Men of Israel, why are you amazed at this, or why do you gaze at us, as if by our own power or piety we had made him walk? 13: "The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus, *the one* whom you delivered and disowned in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him. 14: "But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, 15: but put to death the Prince of life, *the one* whom God raised from the dead, *a fact* to which we are witnesses. 16: "And on the basis of faith in His name, *it is* the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which *comes* through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all.

12: Peter's second recorded sermon. The attention of the crowd was naturally directed toward Peter and John, no doubt due to the beggar's joyous praise. The gathering of the crowd around the healed man gave opportunity for Peter to teach and invite the people to faith in Jesus. Peter answered their "amazement" (verse 11). They were intently staring at Peter and John, as the same word is used in 3:4 - "gaze". Peter questions their amazement as they stare at he and John assuming they had done some miracle on their own. He immediately disclaims any credit or power and launches into an explanation teaching them how this occurred.

13-15: These verses speak for themselves as Peter reminds them of their role in crucifying the very One in whose name this man is healed. Peter's new Spirit filled courage is still evidenced. He pulls no punches.

We are told in verse 16 that the faith in the Name of Jesus was the key to his healing. The translation is awkward because it is difficult to tell by whom and how this faith was demonstrated. Was it by the Apostles, the lame man, or whom? In the context of Peter's speech regarding Jesus, here is the literal translation, "And upon faith in His Name this man whom you behold and know is made strong – His Name and the faith through him gives him this wholeness in the presence of you all".

The lame man is not given direct credit of faith nor of all the faith exhibited. Instead, it is the Name of Jesus given the credit and power.

3:17-26

17: "And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also. 18: "But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. 19: "Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; 20: and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, 21: whom heaven must receive until *the* period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time. 22: "Moses said, 'THE LORD GOD WILL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN; TO HIM YOU SHALL GIVE HEED to everything He says to you. 23: 'And it will be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.' 24: "And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and *his* successors onward, also announced these days. 25: "It is you who are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'AND IN YOUR SEED ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH SHALL BE

BLESSED.' 26: "For you first, God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one *of you* from your wicked ways."

17: After a harsh indictment Peter, having the people's attention, once again offers not wrath and rejection, but grace and hope. Crediting their sin to "ignorance" (lack of knowledge), he allows them the opportunity to receive God's gift of "refreshing". Isn't it interesting that Peter himself lacked understanding and faith as a disciple due to ignorance. Little could he condemn his audience in light of his own history.

18: Something Peter did not grasp until it was shown to him.

19: The word "repent" means "with one's mind" with the intent that one is to now believe differently than before and act on the new belief with a new direction of life and thought. The phrase "times of refreshing" is unique to Peter and in the context it suggests it may be another reference to the Holy Spirit (2:38) in that the Greek αναπνοξω (anapsucho) means to "live or breathe from above". Or it may simply refer to the "restoration" of all things at Messiah's return (20) or refer to the remarks in verse, "For you first, God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one *of you* from your wicked ways." In any case, it points to a fresh relationship with God in which life takes on a new dimension and purpose.⁸

21-22: Peter quotes Deuteronomy 18:15 and 18. See Deuteronomy 15:15-22)

23: A reference to Deuteronomy 15:19.

24: Samuel began the anointing of kings from Saul and David onward and prophets since Samuel have given Messianic promises. These promises often find dual fulfillment, first with an earthly king and then in Jesus' total Messianic ministry. Note, for example Nathan's prophesy to David regarding Solomon's role in building the temple.

II Samuel 7:12-17, 12: "When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. 13: "He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14: "I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, 15: but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took *it* away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. 16: "Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever." 17: In accordance with all these words and all this vision, so Nathan spoke to David."

Acts 13:22-23, 34; and Hebrews 1:5 see these pronouncements as Messianic.

25-26: Refers ultimately to Christ. (See Galatians 3:16)

Chapter four

⁸ There are images in Scripture that might have inspired Peter. See: Deut. 32:2; II Samuel 23:3-4; Ps. 72:6-7 (Messianic); Hosea 14:4-9; etc.

4:1-4

1: “As they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple *guard* and the Sadducees came up to them, 2: being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. 3: And they laid hands on them and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening. 4: But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

1: The priests were those who were in their course of service that week in the temple. They came rushing down to the court of the women to see what the commotion was all about. They were accompanied by the captain of the temple guard (or police) and by some Sadducees. The temple guard was comprised of Jewish men chosen and assigned by the Sanhedrin to keep order within the temple grounds or wherever the priests of Sanhedrin assigned them. They did not have Roman authority however, and could not infringe on the jurisdiction of the Roman authorities.

The Sadducees were likely from the priestly line of Zadok. They trace their history loosely back to the priesthood at Shiloh during the time of the Judges and the house of Eli. The sanctuary and priestly service was moved to Nob after the destruction of Shiloh. It was at Nob where David took refuge from Saul (I Samuel 21:1-10). Later, finding this out, Saul had town and the priesthood destroyed (I Samuel 22). In remembrance of the priests of Nob, David named Abiathar priest in Jerusalem along with Zadok. When Abiathar was exiled, Zadok was named chief priest. Abiathar seems to be a Levite but it is not clear if Zadok was of Levi or Aaron, but I Chronicles 6:1-8 places him in Aaron’s lineage.

Following the return from exile in 535 B.C. the Zadokites attempted to place themselves above the Levites in the temple service but were rebuffed. They continued to fulfill a subordinate role and began to become a party of political and religious clout as the centuries passed. But by the time of the Maccabean revolt the Sadducees emerged as sect of the Jews in about 150 B.C.. Comprised primarily of members of Aaron, they also both married and included members of the house of Levi in their fold in order to regain the temple ascendancy. Their name however derives from Zadok which they claimed is a form of “Zadik” or “righteous”. They saw themselves as the “righteous ones” and the rightful temple priesthood. In Jesus day, the chief priest was a Sadducee from Levi and he had firm power in Jerusalem, presiding over the Sanhedrin.

The Pharisees had a similar history but from the time of the exile were dedicated to the teaching and interpretation of the Law. Their name comes from the Hebrew word “Parash” meaning separate or distinct. This sect came about as follows:

Prior to the rebellion against Antiochus in the second century B.C., the priesthood was corrupt and had conformed itself to the wishes of the pagan Greek/Syrian overlord, Antiochus IV. The backbone of the resistance to this occupation and corruption was a separatist group called the “Hasidim”. These were scribes and teachers of the law. “Hasidim” (from “chasad” or “chesed”) meaning ones who “bow or stoop” was understood as “pious”. So, their party or sect also emerged during the Hasmonean revolt and dynasty. This body included priests, scribes, and teachers of the Law, and as a group they became known as the “separatists” and soon were called by that name “Parushim” transliterated in the English as “Pharisees”.

Their legendary conflicts with the Sadducees are seen frequently in the New Testament (verse 2). The Sadducees are a priestly party, the Pharisees essentially a secular party. Generally, the Pharisees sought to purify the teachings and theology of the Sadducees and were dedicated to the Scripture whereas the Sadducees were dedicated more to the Torah and to tradition. Their dissonance can be traced back to before the exile and the restoration when there was a rival between prophet and priest in Israel.

A major conflict in The New Testament arose between them over the resurrection. The Pharisees believed in it and the Sadducees did not. The Sadducees held more political and religious power than did the Pharisees and controlled the temple, the Sanhedrin and the High Priest was from their party. But among the people, the Pharisees held more sway. The other comparisons of theology are interesting to study and reflect much of modern theological debate today. For example, The Pharisees believe in a predetermination of all things (history is controlled) due to "Fate" or "God's predetermination" much like Calvinists today, whereas the Sadducees held to a strict free will. The choice a man makes determines his ultimate fate much like the Arminian movement. The Sadducees also held to a strict belief in Sheol and neither a sense of an afterlife (the soul perishes with the body), nor of rewards or punishments, angels, or spirits, because they were not clearly defined in the Law of Moses. The Pharisees held to all of these and a "Resurrection", the soul being imperishable suffering eternal torment (note Acts 23:8). The Sadducees neither believed in a personal Messiah, nor in a Messianic age where the faithful souls of the departed would be raised to participate. They only saw the Messiah as a future deliverer establishing an earthly rule. The Pharisees believed it all, except for the "personal Messiah" idea so important to Christians. The Messiah would appear to drive out the heathen Gentiles from Jerusalem and establish a kingdom forever where both converted Gentiles and pious Jews would reap the benefits as well as resurrected faithful.

2: Peter and John's teaching about the resurrection of Jesus from the dead caused the Sadducees to be "greatly disturbed". Likely some onlooker reported this "false doctrine" to the Sadducees (note: Acts 23:6-10). "Greatly disturbed" means that they were exhausted and worn out from all that was going on. The lament, "Oh no, not again," would fit here. Any "resurrection" would overthrow the doctrine of the Sadducees and thus undermine their authority and power.

3: Because it was now late in the day (about 4:00 P.M.), the Apostles were seized and thrown into jail. The Sanhedrin was not about to hold another illegal trial as they did with Jesus. Any judgments had to be rendered during daylight hours. The "jail" may have been a chamber in or adjacent to the temple. The Greek simply states they were placed under watch or guard for the night.

4: Between this speech and the one Peter gave at Pentecost, the believers so far recorded numbers upwards of eight thousand men. Wives and children would be an addition to this number.

4:5-7

5: "On the next day, their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem; 6: and Annas the high priest *was there*, and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of high-priestly descent. 7: When they had placed them in the center, they *began to inquire*, "By what power, or in what name, have you done this?"

5: The three groups comprising the Sanhedrin.

6: Annas was high priest from A.D. 6-15 and replaced by the Romans for his son Eleazar then by Annas' Son-in-law Caiaphas (18-36 A.D.) who was also called Joseph. Annas still had the respect of the Jews and was considered the real high priest. It appears that he and Caiaphas alternated as high priest on a regular basis. Jonathan was the son of Caiaphas and appointed in 36. Alexander is an unknown but apparently part of the family with some authority, perhaps over the temple police.

7: Calling Peter and John before them, (the healed lame man was there also) they inquired as to their authority to teach or perform works of healing. Jesus was asked the exact same question more than once (see: Matthew 21:23 ff.; John 2:18). The "authority" being asked about comes not because the council was curious, but because "authority" was granted by a specific process and special personnel. Today we call it "ordination". From the time of Moses, this ordination or authority was gained by the laying on of hands and a commissioning of an authoritative body.

Numbers 27:18-23, "So the LORD said to Moses, "Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him; and have him stand before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation, and commission him in their sight. "You shall put some of your authority on him, in order that all the congregation of the sons of Israel may obey *him*. "Moreover, he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before the LORD. At his command they shall go out and at his command they shall come in, *both* he and the sons of Israel with him, even all the congregation." Moses did just as the LORD commanded him; and he took Joshua and set him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation. Then he laid his hands on him and commissioned him, just as the LORD had spoken through Moses.

Deuteronomy 34:9, "Now Joshua the son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him; and the sons of Israel listened to him and did as the LORD had commanded Moses."

Laying on of hands or, "samak yad" in the Hebrew, was carried into the New Testament Church as well. It is seen in Acts 6:6; 13:3; I Timothy 4:14; and II Timothy 1:6. It still continues to be the method of ordination in most Christian churches.

It was obvious that these ignorant Galilean fishermen had received no such ordination either by a convening authority or in the name of a recognized authority.

4:8-12

8: Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people, 9: if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well, 10: let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead--by this *name* this man stands here before you in good health. 11: "He is the **STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED** by you, **THE BUILDERS**, *but* **WHICH BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone**. 12: "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."

8: "Filled with the Holy Spirit". Is this the same Peter who, in the face of these same people denied Christ and ran away? Is the idea now that Peter was constantly filled with the Holy Spirit or that

The Holy Spirit filled him on these special occasions? Well first, this third sermon of Peter's reveals that it was a result of the Spirit's power and authority. Second, could both be true? Remember Jesus said, "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves. "But beware of men, for they will hand you over to *the* courts and scourge you in their synagogues; and you will even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. "But when they hand you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say; for it will be given you in that hour what you are to say. "For it is not you who speak, but *it is* the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you." Matthew 10:16-20 (See this author's work on the Gifts and Manifestations of the Holy Spirit)

In any case, they were under the control of the Holy Spirit both during the event of the healing of the lame man in the temple and during the subsequent events. "Rulers" – chief priests.

9-10: As if it was ludicrous to try a person for doing such good as this, Peter says, "if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man,..." and proceeds to boldly answer their question. He makes a clear statement the council cannot misunderstand. The authority is from the name of Jesus Christ (Messiah) of Nazareth whom they crucified and God raised from the dead. Of course, the mention of the resurrection would rankle the Sadducees in the council and please the theology of the Pharisees. If this came to a debate, the Sadducees would once again face embarrassment.

11: Peter quotes Psalm 118:22 and applies it to Jesus while identifying them with the "builders". Jesus also employed this passage in Matthew 12:42 as He condemned the Scribes and Pharisees lack of faith and understanding.

12: Perhaps one of the great verses of truth regarding the way of salvation in all the Bible.

4:13-22

13: Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and *began* to recognize them as having been with Jesus. 14: And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they had nothing to say in reply. 15: But when they had ordered them to leave the Council, they *began* to confer with one another, 16: saying, "What shall we do with these men? For the fact that a noteworthy miracle has taken place through them is apparent to all who live in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. 17: "But so that it will not spread any further among the people, let us warn them to speak no longer to any man in this name." 18: And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. 19: But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; 20: for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard." 21: When they had threatened them further, they let them go (finding no basis on which to punish them) on account of the people, because they were all glorifying God for what had happened; 22: for the man was more than forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.

13: This boldness and fearlessness in the face of the same people who arrested Jesus is from The Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8) and the fact they could marshal scripture from anywhere to back their message was astounding to the leadership as Peter and John were uneducated and untrained. This means they were illiterate, probably could barely if at all read or write, and, if they could it would be so rudimentary as to be backward and ignorant. Further, it was clear they had neither attended or

been trained in any recognized Rabbinic schools nor were members of any recognized religious sect or party. In their later writings we know Peter used a scribe and was still not literate, and John's Greek is very simple - either learned over the years before he wrote his gospel, or he used a scribe also whose grasp of Greek was elementary. Mark's gospel as well is in a more elementary vernacular. As the interview continued, the Jewish rulers recognized these men had been with Jesus.

14: The leaders, who knew of this lame beggar, had nothing to say in reply when they saw him standing there before them with Peter and John completely healed.

15-18: Setting the three men outside while they conferred among themselves they concluded to prohibit any of them from speaking or teaching in the name (authority) of Jesus, even though they had to admit that the healing was real. Their hardness of heart is amazing and it goes to prove that those who "will not believe until they see some miracle" are disingenuous. Even those who do see are not always convinced; witness the Israelites who crossed the Red Sea on dry ground and then saw Pharaoh's army drowned behind them and proceeded a short time later to dance around the Golden Calf and cry to return to Egypt. The council here cannot deny that this miracle took place, but at the same time refused to be moved by it choosing rather, to prohibit any further spread of the fame and power of Jesus. The good to be done for the people by His power is to be subordinated to the will of the council who feared for their own loss of control.

19-20: Peter enjoys the final challenge thrown in the face of the rulers and elders when he asks, "Shall we obey God or men?" (5:29).

21-22: The rulers and elders had a greater regard for the reaction of the people (and especially for their position if they were to condemn the apostles and punish them), than for God's view of their hearts. After all, the Pharisees were the party in the people's favor, and The Sadducees did not want to incur more disfavor. Although there was no cause for either the arrest or trial of the apostles, they commanded them and forbade speaking in the name of Jesus. Adding to the recognition of the legitimacy of the miracle, both the hardness of heart and the hypocrisy of the Jewish leaders is revealed.

22: "More than forty years old" designates a full-grown man, mature, not able to become well through the natural process of growth or healing. He would never "grow out of it".

4:23-26

23: "When they had been released, they went to their own *companions* and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. 24: And when they heard *this*, they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, "O Lord, it is You who MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM, 25: who by the Holy Spirit, *through* the mouth of our father David Your servant, said, 'WHY DID THE GENTILES RAGE, AND THE PEOPLES DEVISE FUTILE THINGS? 26: 'THE KINGS OF THE EARTH TOOK THEIR STAND, AND THE RULERS WERE GATHERED TOGETHER AGAINST THE LORD AND AGAINST HIS CHRIST.'

23: "They went to...". Likely to the house of Mary, John Mark's mother where the apostles had been staying. This house plays a prominent place all through the Book of Acts as well as in Jesus' Passover supper with His disciples. Peter and John, and probably the healed man, reported everything that had transpired before the chief priests, (rulers) and elders.

24-30: The praise filled prayer of the “companions”. The form of the prayer, though quite Jewish, is a fair model for any prayer.

24: The sovereignty of God is extolled here as quotes are spoken from the themes and words of Exodus 20:11; Nehemiah 9:6; and Psalm 146:6. This praise extols God for His power and providence over everything He has created, and recognizes His place above any other power.

25-26: Quoting Psalm 2:1-2, continues to demonstrate that all other power and plan is futile if it opposes God. The remainder of Psalm 2 would come to mind here as anytime a Scripture passage is begun, the whole passage and its point comes to the mind of the Jew.

Psalm 2:3: "Let us tear their fetters apart and cast away their cords from us!" 4: He who sits in the heavens laughs, The Lord scoffs at them. 5: Then He will speak to them in His anger And terrify them in His fury, saying, 6: "But as for Me, I have installed My King Upon Zion, My holy mountain." 7: "I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. 8: 'Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the *very* ends of the earth as Your possession. 9: 'You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware.'" 10: Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; Take warning, O judges of the earth. 11: Worship the LORD with reverence And rejoice with trembling. 12: Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish *in* the way, For His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!

Thus the comment:

4:27-28

27: "For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, 28: to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur."

27: “Anointed” - “chrio”, is the Greek word for the Hebrew “mashach” to “rub with oil”, the same word from which the title “Messiah” stems.

28: “Predestined” here agrees with the theology of the Pharisees whose teaching was popular with the people, but is not in the Psalm (2). In the Greek word “pro-oridzo” is the picture of a setting up of a boundary in advance of those who would arrive. It does not mean that the Jewish Elders and Rulers were relieved of their free will as they proceeded along the path they chose. God simply has foreordained that those who choose their path will play into His plan whether they choose evil or good.

4:29-31

29: "And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence, 30: while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus." 31: And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and *began* to speak the word of God with boldness."

29-30: A prayer for the continued success of the apostles recognizing it is actually God's hand and the authority of Jesus' name that causes the signs and wonders take place.

31: The sign that their prayer was heard and that they could continue to work in spite of the warning of the council. This verse ends the simple act of going to prayer we began in 3:1.

4:32-37

32: "And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one *of them* claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them. 33: And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all. 34: For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales 35: and lay them at the apostles' feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need. 36: Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement), 37: and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

32: Luke begins a new theme here (continuing through chapter five), showing the general attitude of the new company of, "The Way", a name by which these converted Jews were first called. (See Acts 9:2) "Of one heart and soul". This means they were like one living organism, the key to their selflessness on behalf of those in need in their midst. (Review 2:44) This means that they had a sense that any personal belonging was at the disposal of others in need.

33: "The resurrection" - an event of such significance and power that the apostles could not keep silent about it because it was the verification of who Jesus really was and of everything that He said and did. The Pharisees did not complain for the fear of shooting themselves in the foot, and the Sadducees did not complain for the fear of alienating the people.

34-35: Their first community concern was for the poor and needy. The general population largely ignored these people and often the idea that they were responsible for their own misfortune became an excuse to overlook their needs. Only the law which required a tithe offering for the poor once a year as well as the general consensus that one ought to help the poor kept the needy from being totally deprived. But the Spirit of God instilled in the new church the justice and concern for the poor God's prophets had preached for centuries. (See this author's work on "Tithing") This even escalated to many selling tracts of land and giving the proceeds to the apostles for distribution among the poor. This was strictly voluntary as each person's heart moved him, and was not a requirement. But it certainly showed the love and faith of each who did so.

36-39: The introduction of Barnabas, a central figure in the early church. As a descendant of the tribe of Levi, he had no temple duties as he lived in Cyprus. By the time of Jesus, not every Levite was without personal property. Though "Levi" had been given no tribal portion in the land after the conquest, some of the tribe of Levi appear to have had small tracts of land within the other tribal boundaries of Israel (See: Nehemiah 13:10). Barnabas' name ("Son of encouragement") is well justified as we follow him through the Book of Acts. He was a cousin to John Mark and we read of him in Acts, I Corinthians, Galatians and Colossians. Barnabas' life is worth studying and emulating.

Chapter five

5:1-2

1: But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, 2: and kept back *some* of the price for himself, with his wife's full knowledge, and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet.

1: A contrast to Barnabas (4:36-39), in both heart and action. Ananias (Hananiah – “God has favored”) with his wife Sapphira (“Sapphire” or “Lapis Lazuli”), conceived what they thought was a clever deal. The apostles took responsibility for a collection of goods and money, distributing them as needed among the congregation. Those who had nothing or those who gave everything could draw upon the resources as needed. The heart of many in the church was to sell everything and give it all for the benefit of the poor and become “poor themselves” simply drawing as need arose.

2: Ananias and Sapphira thought they could sell a tract of land and give part of it to the apostles claiming they had given all and then still draw upon the collection as well. In this way they could feign poverty, as well as be recognized for their generous heart. They had the freedom to retain whatever they wanted and only give some to the Lord’s work.

5:3

3: But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back *some* of the price of the land?"

3: Satan’s target is the “heart”. (Note: John 13:2; I Peter 5:8) The heart must be guarded and alert to these schemes (I Peter 5:9). We are reminded of Genesis 6:5, “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually”, and of Jeremiah 17:9-10, "The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it? ‘I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his deeds.’”

“...lie to The Holy Spirit”, is the same as lying to God (verse 4).

5:4-6

5:4: "While it remained *unsold*, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." 5: And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last; and great fear came over all who heard of it. 6: The young men got up and covered him up, and after carrying him out, they buried him.

4: They were under no obligation or compulsion to give. So why did they? This is Peter’s question. Peter is heartbroken but once again points to their heart as the source of the sin. In this case, verses 3 and 4 suggest that there was a battle in their hearts before their choice was made. Once again we are brought back to Genesis 3 where the “serpent” motivated Eve and Adam to disobey God and then trying to avoid blame were cursed and sentenced to death. Ananias and his

wife hadn't learned that lesson.

5: Ananias, after hearing these words, fell dead. Peter neither caused his death nor was responsible for it. What Ananias heard in his heart the instant before he fell, we may never know. But his hypocrisy (appearing as a generous giver to the church but as a liar to God) did not go unnoticed.

6: "Young men" simply "younger men". These men either got up on their own, or were selected for this task. The existence of the comment may suggest that this was a lesson to the younger or newer Christian men or that they were simply more physically able to accomplish the task or, that the "older men" were busily involved in ministry duties.

5:7-10

7: Now there elapsed an interval of about three hours, and his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. 8: And Peter responded to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for such and such a price?" And she said, "Yes, that was the price." 9: Then Peter *said* to her, "Why is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out *as well*." 10: And immediately she fell at his feet and breathed her last, and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband.

7-10: Peter asked her to affirm the price Ananias claimed to have sold it for. He gave her a chance to recant and repent. But she chose to confirm the lie. Her fate became that of her husband. Putting "The Spirit of The Lord to the test" is believed by some to be the unforgivable sin. Whether or not it is, it certainly underscores a lack of faith, and the fact that hearts are under need of constant work. The battle has just begun...and it is in the heart of every man, believer or not.

5:11

11: And great fear came over the whole church, and over all who heard of these things.

11: What would have been the consequences had not this act been revealed first to Peter and then to the church? This event became a galvanizing point of memory when it came to Christians conducting themselves in a manner of truth, faith and integrity as well as a confirmed trust that nothing gets past God and the Spirit.

The word "church" is Luke's addition from a later time. At this time, the new believers were simply called the "company" or "congregation". Never the less, the "church" had begun. The word church is "ekklesia", meaning, "those called out". This would be "called out" from the world and its destiny.

5:12-16

12: "At the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's portico. 13: But none of the rest dared to associate with them; however, the people held them in high esteem. 14: And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to *their number*, 15: to such an extent that they even carried the sick out into the streets and laid them on cots and pallets, so that when Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on any one of them.

16: Also the people from the cities in the vicinity of Jerusalem were coming together, bringing people who were sick or afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all being healed.

12: A repeat of 2:43. “Solomon’s portico” seems to have become a popular meeting place for the growing followers of Christ.

13: “None of the rest”...Likely the chief priests and Sadducees – contrasted with the “people” who held them in high esteem.

14: Noting the women among the believers is fresh to Luke’s narrative.

15-16: Faith was so intense among the followers that they placed the invalids and the infirm on the street where Peter would likely pass, his shadow falling with healing on those awaiting him. Of course it isn’t Peter’s shadow, or some object that brings the miracle, but the faith in and power of Jesus. 16: The news travels like wildfire to the surrounding communities and many infirm or possessed people are brought to Jerusalem and to the apostles and are healed.

5:17-26

17: “But the high priest rose up, along with all his associates (that is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with jealousy. 18: They laid hands on the apostles and put them in a public jail. 19: But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the gates of the prison, and taking them out he said, 20: “Go, stand and speak to the people in the temple the whole message of this Life.” 21: Upon hearing *this*, they entered into the temple about daybreak and *began* to teach. Now when the high priest and his associates came, they called the Council together, even all the Senate of the sons of Israel, and sent *orders* to the prison house for them to be brought. 22: But the officers who came did not find them in the prison; and they returned and reported back, 23: saying, “We found the prison house locked quite securely and the guards standing at the doors; but when we had opened up, we found no one inside.” 24: Now when the captain of the temple *guard* and the chief priests heard these words, they were greatly perplexed about them as to what would come of this. 25: But someone came and reported to them, “The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!” 26: Then the captain went along with the officers and *proceeded* to bring them *back* without violence (for they were afraid of the people, that they might be stoned).

17: “Rose up” After hearing about all that was going on, the High Priest (and head of the Sanhedrin) literally stood to his feet along with the rest of the Sadducees and exploded in anger, having “had it” with all of this. “Filled with jealousy” “ζηλος” - the heat and malice of jealousy depicting a liquid boiling or a metal glowing. Also translated “Zealot”.

18: Again the temple police are called to apprehend the apostles. “In a public jail” to await trial the next day. “Laid hands” – imposed authority.

19-20: An “Angel of The Lord” opened the prison gates. This is the first of four references to “An Angel of the Lord” in Acts. This is a different messenger apparently from “The Angel of the Lord” seen frequently in the Old Testament. Verse 23 reveals that the guards didn’t know the prisoners had escaped or that the doors were opened, much like the tomb “event” of Jesus. 20: The apostles are told to keep their message going on at the temple. The angel calls it the “whole message of this Life”. “This Life” is the new life resulting from faith in Jesus. It suggests that Christianity

is a totally new and different way of living, and it is reflective of the resurrection life Jesus Himself displayed with power. Note: II Corinthians 5:16-17, “ Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know *Him in this way* no longer. Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.”

21: In obeying the command of the angel, Peter and other apostles returned to the Temple at the very place where they had been arrested after the healing of the lame man. Meanwhile that same morning, thinking that the apostles were still confined, the High Priest called the entire council together. The council was comprised of some 71 men, and often was as large as 100 men. “His associates” – literally “those with him”. “Senate” – poor translation for “council elders” or “aged rulers”. The root of the word is “γερον” meaning “old”. The High Priest sent the temple guard to bring the apostles into the council for interrogation.

In pondering why God affected this release from jail, it seems at first glance to be no need for it. But without this event, the Apostles would have been brought before the council and things may have gone very badly since (verse 33) the outcome was going to be the possibility of execution by a very angry High Priest and some members of the council, especially from among the Sadducees. But the report of this event by their own temple guard caused a perplexity among many there.

In fact, Gamaliel, invited to sit on the council to no doubt give weight to the Sanhedrin’s word, (see verses 34-39) appeared to have been moved by this event. It is possible that the release from prison, having no apparent purpose, well might have been done for the sole benefit of Gamaliel and others who accepted his counsel following the testimony of Peter and the others who caused Caiaphas to become enraged.

22-24: A stunned council pondered, “What this would become”. We are not told of their exact deliberations but we do know they were “perplexed” and exasperated. Perplexed is “διαπορευω” and it carries with it the idea of pinned in a trap, with no way out. It also carries with it the idea of being tested. The council was at a crossroads and each member had to consider the impact of what had just been said and what had transpired in light of what they were going to do about it and the consequences thereof.

25-26: The apostles did not put up a fuss, nor try to incite the people. Perhaps they had learned from their Master’s demeanor in the Garden at His arrest. The guard was diplomatic with the situation as well because they feared the crowd might riot and stone them. Fearlessly, the apostles once again went with the guard to the council chambers. This was their second visit to the council, after their third arrest and confinement and Peter’s fourth opportunity to once again repeat the message of the Christ before a crowd of witnesses.

5:27-33

27: When they had brought them, they stood them before the Council. The high priest questioned them, 28: saying, "We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man's blood upon us." 29: But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men. 30: "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross. 31: "He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. 32: "And we are witnesses of these things; and *so is* the Holy

Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him." 33: But when they heard this, they were cut to the quick and intended to kill them.

27-28: The High Priest, either through misunderstanding or deliberate distortion of the facts, totally distorted the Apostles' motives for teaching the people in the Temple. Somehow he tried to establish that the apostles were trying to incite a riot by claiming that Jesus' death was the fault of the council so that the people might be moved to some action against the council for their culpability. It may have been his intent to instill guilt in the apostles as a manipulation to get them to stop their preaching.

29: Peter would have none of it. He did not even attempt to defend the accusation. He ignored the High Priest and repeated the challenge in 4:19-20 redirecting the attention of the council to the real issue, what happened and what it meant.

30: For the fourth time, Peter speaks the same message including the fact that Jesus was put to death by the people and their religious leaders (i.e. the Jews, Acts 2:22; 3:13-15; 4:10). He goads them and throws this in their face even though he knows they we're neither the origin of this crucifixion or knowledgeable about what was happening at the time (3:17-18). Then he states that God raised Him from the dead, pitting the Sadducees against the Pharisees against each other once again.

31: See discussion regarding the "right hand" at 2:33.

32: Peter makes the inference that those on the council are neither obedient to God nor in touch with God's Spirit.

33: The council was infuriated and though "cut to the quick" were moved, not to repentance, but to murder (Note: 2:37-40). It was time for cooler heads to prevail.

5:34-39

34: But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the Law, respected by all the people, stood up in the Council and gave orders to put the men outside for a short time. 35: And he said to them, "Men of Israel, take care what you propose to do with these men. 36: "For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a group of about four hundred men joined up with him. But he was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. 37: "After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census and drew away *some* people after him; he too perished, and all those who followed him were scattered. 38: "So in the present case, I say to you, stay away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or action is of men, it will be overthrown; 39: but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them; or else you may even be found fighting against God."

34-39: Gamaliel was a Pharisee and the most famous teacher of his time. He was a grandson of the noted "Hillel" and a teacher of Saul (Paul -Acts 22:3), later president of the Sanhedrin, and the first of the seven rabbis termed "Rabban" (Rabbi of Rabbis). He was a man of judicial temper and not prone to go off at a tangent, though his brilliant young pupil Saul went to the limit with Stephen without any restraint from Gamaliel so far as the record goes. Gamaliel is not championing the cause of the apostles, but his counsel causes us to think that that the events transpiring may have given him pause regarding what God was actually doing. This was very much a "wait and see"

policy generally, but not happily accepted by the counsel. The Pharisees, The High priest and his associates we're so furious that the apostles were ordered flogged.

Was Saul of Tarsus there at that time? Is this how Luke received the account or did he later interview Nicodemus or Joseph of Arimathea? (Mark 15:43, John 19:38) While the Pharisees remained aloof in the matter, the Sadducees were incensed and would not let the disciples go free if for no other reason than to prevent any ascendancy by the Pharisees in the group of which Gamaliel was a member. The hostility between the Pharisees and the Sadducees was not soothed by these events. (Both Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were Pharisees, disciples of Jesus and members of the council). We have no other history of "Thudas" and the "census" is that spoken of in Luke's Gospel taken while Augustus was emperor and Quirinius was Governor. This "Judas" was the leader of a serious group of rebels who later became known as The Zealots. It was this group that who precipitated the rebellion against Rome (66 A.D.) resulting in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D..

5:40-42

40: They took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and *then* released them. 41: So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for *His* name. 42: And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus *as* the Christ.

40: "Flogged" according to Jewish custom (Deuteronomy 25:2-3) the guilty party received 40 lashes less one with a whip having three thongs. The sufferer could receive four strokes upon the chest and eight upon his back with one extra to boot making thirty-nine. (See also: II Corinthians 11:24)

41-42: Self-explanatory.

Chapter six

6:1

1: Now at this time while the disciples were increasing *in number*, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic *Jews* against the *native* Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving *of food*.

1: A new theme is introduced by Luke designed to give background and establish the entrance of Saul of Tarsus into the story. Most of those who had attended the Passover feast, Unleavened Bread or The Feast of Pentecost have returned to their homes of origin, many carrying the new faith with them (Acts 2:9-11). However some appear to have remained in Israel. Time has passed ("Now at this time" should be "Now in these/those days").

In Jerusalem and the surrounding cities, new believers were increasing in number and it was becoming more difficult for the apostles to distribute the resources and feed the hungry by themselves. Many Jews were now disenfranchised, as family after family cut off those who believed from their own families and homes, leaving them without the essentials of life. Some were

now losing their employment, others their place to live if they were renting, and still others were left without help by their fellow citizens because they had turned to Jesus as the Messiah.

There were two groups of Jews in the church, one group was comprised of Hellenistic Jews, the other of native Jews. The Hellenistic Jews were originally from outside Israel, and were born and raised in cities throughout the empire. This was due partly to the dispersion 700 years earlier when Assyria caused a forced emigration of thousands of Israelites to far away places after their conquest of the land. Babylon did the same thing 130 years later (600 years before Christ), though many returned to their native land with Ezra and Nehemiah. All of these “dispersed” Jews ultimately fell under the rule and influence of Alexander The Great and Greek customs including culture and language. The Greek word for Greece is “Hellene” thus we get the word “Hellenized” for Greek speaking/acclulturated Jews.

Some argue that these “Hellenists” were not Jews at all but Gentiles and that is why they were disregarded. There is no textual evidence to support this, and the Gentile “issue” is a ways away. But when it does occur, Luke makes it clear that it is Gentiles at issue, not “Hellenists”. Further, Gentile “widows” would not be left wanting in the streets as their care did not depend upon their religious convictions. This event sets the stage for the selection of seven men with Greek names who later are used in a wide spread ministry outside Jerusalem to other Hellenistic Jews.

There appears to be some prejudice developing against these “Hellenists” by the native Hebrew population. Native Jews tended to look down upon non-native Jews - (note the Samaritan prejudice). A “complaint” arises that the widows from Hellenistic families are being “overlooked” in the daily serving of food. The form of this “complaint” is a grumbling or murmuring, not by the women but by others on their behalf. “Overlooked” is “disregarded” and carries the subtle idea of favoritism of the native Jew and discrimination against the Hellenistic Jew.

6:2

2: “So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables.”

2: The apostles were doing everything and were losing ground. “Neglect the word of God” or “teaching”.

6:3-4

3: “Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. 4: “But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

3-4: This decision is likely modeled after the action of Moses at Jethro’s suggestion as found in Exodus 18. This responsibility of service became an office in the later church. The Greek word for “service” is “diakonia” from which we get our term “deacon”.

6:5-6

5: “The statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and

Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch. 6: And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them.

5: All seven have Greek names, interesting in light of the controversy. Only Stephen and Philip receive further mention and here, Stephen is the only man whose spiritual character is described.

6: The “laying on of hands” of ordination and commissioning. (See note on 4:7) Also employed to impart The Holy Spirit or spiritual gifts to others.

6:7

7: The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.

7: Repeat of the “growth” theme, but this time highlighting that “a great many priests were becoming obedient to the faith”. These were likely from among the Sadducees and Levites, as Pharisees were not of a priestly lineage. This demonstrates that even the hardest of hearts and most stringent of theologies can be transformed by God. Likely these were men often in the temple where the apostles did most of their teaching. Their faith in Jesus had to stick in the craw of their fellow Sadducees, especially the High Priest and his close companions in the Sanhedrin.

6:8-10

8: “And Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people. 9: But some men from what was called the Synagogue of the Freedmen, *including* both Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and some from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and argued with Stephen. 10: But they were unable to cope with the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking.

8: The account of Stephen comprises nearly two chapters of Luke’s narrative. The contrast between the faith of Stephen and the conspiracy and disbelief of the council is once again highlighted. Stephen becomes a central figure due to his faith and performance of wonders among the people. This follows the “laying on of hands” and later Philip also is seen in a similar role (8:6). His name is Greek and means “crown”, “wreath” as a “victory wreath” in the Greek games, which was often made of woven olive branches.

9-10: These were Jewish men who had been released from slavery and had a synagogue of their own kind somewhere in Egypt or North Africa. The men from Cilicia and Asia may not have been of this group, but Saul of Tarsus could have been with them. In anger, they argued with Stephen but were unable to prevail. Stephen was full of faith and the Holy Spirit. No doubt they were angered all the more because they couldn’t rattle Stephen. Seeking to destroy him proved that Stephen had a major impact upon the city.

6:11-15

11: Then they secretly induced men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and *against* God." 12: And they stirred up the people, the elders and the scribes, and they came up to him and dragged him away and brought him before the Council. 13: They put forward false witnesses who said, "This man incessantly speaks against this holy place and the Law; 14: for we have heard him say that this Nazarene, Jesus, will destroy this place and

alter the customs which Moses handed down to us." 15: And fixing their gaze on him, all who were sitting in the Council saw his face like the face of an angel.

11-14: Here we are again. In a scene not unlike that of our Lord's arrest, trial, torture and execution, Stephen is falsely accused, dragged before the Sanhedrin and placed on trial before the council. But this time, his accusers were likely Pharisees (leaders in all the synagogues of the Jews). And they may have well been put up to this treachery by the council. At this meeting of the council, Gamaliel and Saul were very likely in attendance, as we know for a certainty that Saul was there (7:58). But since the accusations came from a branch of the Pharisees of which they were members, they remained silent.

15: His face was like that of an angel. This refers to the glory and glow emanating from Stephen's face akin to that of Moses after receiving the law (Exodus 34:30).

Chapter seven

7:1

1: The high priest said, "Are these things so?"

1: The question is designed to put Stephen on the defense and into a state of denial while they all badger him about every little thing attempting to entrap him.

7:2

7:2: And he said, "Hear me, brethren and fathers! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran,

2: "Brethren and fathers" terms of respect designed to demonstrate they are all of one seed. Fathers" refers to the elders in the council (see note on 5:21). The lengthy narrative that follows is typical of the Jews when demonstrating a truth, so that the truth can be seen in the context of their common history. Stephen's speech moves quickly to Moses and His emphasis is that God does the unexpected and does so to fulfill His promises and covenants. The main point begins to be made beginning with verse 35.

7:3-35

3: and said to him, 'LEAVE YOUR COUNTRY AND YOUR RELATIVES, AND COME INTO THE LAND THAT I WILL SHOW YOU.' 4: "Then he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. From there, after his father died, *God* had him move to this country in which you are now living. 5: "But He gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot of ground, and *yet*, even when he had no child, He promised that HE WOULD GIVE IT TO HIM AS A POSSESSION, AND TO HIS DESCENDANTS AFTER HIM. 6: "But God spoke to this effect, that his DESCENDANTS WOULD BE ALIENS IN A FOREIGN LAND, AND THAT THEY WOULD BE ENSLAVED AND MISTREATED FOR FOUR HUNDRED YEARS. 7: " 'AND WHATEVER NATION TO WHICH THEY WILL BE IN BONDAGE I MYSELF WILL JUDGE,' said God, 'AND AFTER THAT THEY WILL COME OUT AND SERVE ME IN THIS PLACE.' 8: "And He gave him the covenant of

circumcision; and so *Abraham* became the father of Isaac, and circumcised him on the eighth day; and Isaac *became the father of* Jacob, and Jacob *of* the twelve patriarchs. 9: "The patriarchs became jealous of Joseph and sold him into Egypt. *Yet* God was with him, 10: and rescued him from all his afflictions, and granted him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he made him governor over Egypt and all his household. 11: "Now a famine came over all Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction *with it*, and our fathers could find no food. 12: "But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent our fathers *there* the first time. 13: "On the second *visit* Joseph made himself known to his brothers, and Joseph's family was disclosed to Pharaoh. 14: "Then Joseph sent *word* and invited Jacob his father and all his relatives to come to him, seventy-five persons *in all*. 15: "And Jacob went down to Egypt and *there* he and our fathers died. 16: "*From there* they were removed to Shechem and laid in the tomb which Abraham had purchased for a sum of money from the sons of Hamor in Shechem. 17: "But as the time of the promise was approaching which God had assured to Abraham, the people increased and multiplied in Egypt, 18: until THERE AROSE ANOTHER KING OVER EGYPT WHO KNEW NOTHING ABOUT JOSEPH. 19: "It was he who took shrewd advantage of our race and mistreated our fathers so that they would expose their infants and they would not survive. 20: "It was at this time that Moses was born; and he was lovely in the sight of God, and he was nurtured three months in his father's home. 21: "And after he had been set outside, Pharaoh's daughter took him away and nurtured him as her own son. 22: "Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, and he was a man of power in words and deeds. 23: "But when he was approaching the age of forty, it entered his mind to visit his brethren, the sons of Israel. 24: "And when he saw one *of them* being treated unjustly, he defended him and took vengeance for the oppressed by striking down the Egyptian. 25: "And he supposed that his brethren understood that God was granting them deliverance through him, but they did not understand. 26: "On the following day he appeared to them as they were fighting together, and he tried to reconcile them in peace, saying, 'Men, you are brethren, why do you injure one another?' 27: "But the one who was injuring his neighbor pushed him away, saying, 'WHO MADE YOU A RULER AND JUDGE OVER US? 28: 'YOU DO NOT MEAN TO KILL ME AS YOU KILLED THE EGYPTIAN YESTERDAY, DO YOU?' 29: "At this remark, MOSES FLED AND BECAME AN ALIEN IN THE LAND OF MIDIAN, where he became the father of two sons. 30: "After forty years had passed, AN ANGEL APPEARED TO HIM IN THE WILDERNESS OF MOUNT Sinai, IN THE FLAME OF A BURNING THORN BUSH. 31: "When Moses saw it, he marveled at the sight; and as he approached to look *more* closely, there came the voice of the Lord: 32: 'I AM THE GOD OF YOUR FATHERS, THE GOD OF ABRAHAM AND ISAAC AND JACOB.' Moses shook with fear and would not venture to look. 33: "BUT THE LORD SAID TO HIM, 'TAKE OFF THE SANDALS FROM YOUR FEET, FOR THE PLACE ON WHICH YOU ARE STANDING IS HOLY GROUND. 34: 'I HAVE CERTAINLY SEEN THE OPPRESSION OF MY PEOPLE IN EGYPT AND HAVE HEARD THEIR GROANS, AND I HAVE COME DOWN TO RESCUE THEM; COME NOW, AND I WILL SEND YOU TO EGYPT.' 35: "This Moses whom they disowned, saying, 'WHO MADE YOU A RULER AND A JUDGE?' is the one whom God sent *to be* both a ruler and a deliverer with the help of the angel who appeared to him in the thorn bush.

35: Stephen begins here to point out that even though Israel rejected and disowned Moses, God saw to it that Moses became the deliverer of the very people who rejected him and whom Pharaoh sought to kill. He introduces the phrase, "This Moses whom they disowned" and seeks to parallel that reaction of the people to the current reaction of the people to Christ.

7: 36

36: "This man led them out, performing wonders and signs in the land of Egypt and in the Red Sea and in the wilderness for forty years."

36: Again striking the parallel.

7:37-38

37: "This is the Moses who said to the sons of Israel, 'GOD WILL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN.' 38: "This is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness together with the angel who was speaking to him on Mount Sinai, and *who was* with our fathers; and he received living oracles to pass on to you.

37-38: Stephen moves toward illustrating the fulfillment in Christ, as Peter did in 3:22-23. 38: Jewish tradition from ancient times teaches that the law was given to Moses through angelic mediation. Mount Sinai is not on the "Sinai Peninsula, but in Arabia, across the Gulf of Aqaba (Red Sea) to the East (See Galatians 4:25).

7:39

39: "Our fathers were unwilling to be obedient to him, but repudiated him and in their hearts turned back to Egypt,

39: Stephen begins to drive the point home. They cannot deny the facts of his narrative, but are becoming more and more unhappy at where this is leading. He has used the terms "our fathers" many times now, and the comparison to those he is addressing is becoming clear.

7:40-43

40: "SAYING TO AARON, 'MAKE FOR US GODS WHO WILL GO BEFORE US; FOR THIS MOSES WHO LED US OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT--WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM.' 41: "At that time they made a calf and brought a sacrifice to the idol, and were rejoicing in the works of their hands. 42: "But God turned away and delivered them up to serve the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, 'IT WAS NOT TO ME THAT YOU OFFERED VICTIMS AND SACRIFICES FORTY YEARS IN THE WILDERNESS, WAS IT, O HOUSE OF ISRAEL? 43: 'YOU ALSO TOOK ALONG THE TABERNACLE OF MOLOCH AND THE STAR OF THE GOD ROMPHA, THE IMAGES WHICH YOU MADE TO WORSHIP. I ALSO WILL REMOVE YOU BEYOND BABYLON.'

40-43: Stephen has now condemned the religion of his hearers by inferring that they are just like their disobedient and rebellious predecessors. When Moses was delayed for an unexpected time the people went astray and made a golden calf to worship. As Jesus delays His return, will His people do likewise? (Note: II Peter 3:3-4) He continues with this theme as he speaks of the consistent spiritual harlotry of Israel time and time again. Then he comes to the building of the temple and the coveted power they wield over the people because of their position.

7:44-50

44: "Our fathers had the tabernacle of testimony in the wilderness, just as He who spoke to Moses directed *him* to make it according to the pattern which he had seen. 45: "And having received it in their turn, our fathers brought it in with Joshua upon dispossessing the nations whom God drove out before our fathers, until the time of David. 46: "*David* found favor in God's sight, and asked that he might find a dwelling place for the God of Jacob. 47: "But it was Solomon who built a house for Him. 48: "However, the Most High does not dwell in *houses* made by *human* hands; as the prophet says: 49: 'HEAVEN IS MY THRONE, AND EARTH IS THE FOOTSTOOL OF MY FEET; WHAT KIND OF HOUSE WILL YOU BUILD FOR ME?' says the Lord, 'OR WHAT PLACE IS THERE FOR MY REPOSE? 50: 'WAS IT NOT MY HAND WHICH MADE ALL THESE THINGS?'

44-50: Stephen quotes Isaiah 66:1-2 that responds to the false accusation that he (Stephen) was speaking against the "holy place". His point is that their entire emphasis on the temple and their power therein is without God's approval and thus useless in spiritual matters. He now draws his conclusion:

7:51-53

51: "You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did. 52: "Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become; 53: you who received the law as ordained by angels, and *yet* did not keep it."

51: Stephen boldly and courageously condemns their hypocrisy. Though circumcised in body, they were unclean in heart, no better than the heathen Gentiles for all their fleshly works.

52: Stephen shows his knowledge of the teachings of Jesus. He asks a rhetorical question he then answers for them and adds that they, like their fathers not only killed the prophets who foretold the coming of the Righteous One, but the righteous One as well. He reiterates the same words Jesus used in Matthew 5:12 and 23:29-37, and ultimately receives the same response.

53: As far as the law goes, (referring to the accusation he had spoken against it) they may have received it but have not kept it.

7:54

7:54: Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they *began* gnashing their teeth at him.

54: "When they heard" (*akouontes*). Present active participle of *akouo*, "while hearing". "They were cut to the quick". Literally, "heart". (See 5:33) As in Peter's speech, the word "cut" means to "saw or grind". They "gnashed their teeth at him". This is a physical reaction displaying biting with loud noise, to grind the teeth in fury like a snarling pack of dogs. An outward visual display of an internal reality. Stephen knew what lay in store.

7:55-56

55: "But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; 56: and he said, 'Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.'"

55: Again, Luke notes that Stephen was "full of the Holy Spirit". (See discussion on this in 4:8-12) God's children are both born of the Spirit, and on special occasions, "filled with the Spirit" in order to fulfill a special ministry or circumstance. In other words, the Spirit generates within the individual a special anointing or grace for these times. It is not that He leaves and returns. Stephen's gaze was upwards, and though in a closed chamber, he saw the "heavens opened" and Jesus in a vision reminiscent of Daniel 7:13.

56: In Stephen's vision, Jesus, the "Son of Man", is standing, rather than sitting at the right hand of God. This is the only place this is found and many commentators feel that this standing was in preparation for receiving Stephen or as a sign that the coming of "The Son of Man" was imminent.

7:57

57: "But they cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears and rushed at him with one impulse".

57: The loud shouts and covering their ears was to blur the perceived "blasphemy" (See Leviticus 24:10-16). Stephen, in their thinking, had used God's name in vain and broken the key third commandment in their hearing. As one they rushed at him, grabbed him and in a fury dragged him out of the council building.

7:58-60

58: "When they had driven him out of the city, they *began stoning him*; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul. 59: They went on stoning Stephen as he called on *the Lord* and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" 60: Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" Having said this, he fell asleep".

58: The Jews were not allowed to administer capital punishment, but the fury and hate overcame any thought of restraint. They likely took Stephen to the edge of or down into the Valley of Hinnom. Here, stones of appreciable size would be available. Stoning was a terrible way to die. The stones used were of various sizes, some to be thrown while the person was standing so that he would soon collapse and then some large and heavy, being lifted over the head and cast upon the prone body to crush him to death. The direct witnesses threw the first stones and then others could join in. The purpose was to purge evil from Israel. This seems like the one law the council elders were willing to obey.

59-60: The stoning continued and Stephen knew he was going to die. So he called upon the Lord Jesus to receive his spirit as Jesus had done on the cross and, like his Savior, forgave them their sin before he expired, no doubt infuriating the perpetrators even more. "Fell asleep" is a euphemism for death.

This execution was against Roman law, but for some reason the Jews felt they could either risk Roman wrath or felt free to do so for some other reason. There is no record of the Roman authorities ever pursuing this matter, including the time following when Saul went after the rest of the “seven” and went house-to-house dragging people out to imprison them or have them put to death.

EXCURSUS –WHERE WERE THE ROMANS DURING ALL THIS?

The Jews were allowed considerable freedom to run their own legal affairs with the exception of administering capital punishment. In fact, the only times the Romans got involved with the Jews was for: 1. Taxation, 2: In case of a suspected or real insurrection, riot, revolt or crime meriting capital punishment and 3: If the Jews brought something to their attention. So in the case of the murder of Stephen, where was the Roman authority, and where was Pilate? There is neither Roman intervention or permission in the case of the stoning of Stephen. Why?

From 6 A.D. to 66 A.D. a Roman official called either a procurator, governor or prefect governed Judea. This began under Augustus. Appointed by Tiberius, Pilate was the fifth procurator to rule Judea, and followed Valerius Gratus, also appointed by Tiberius. Gratus was the procurator for about eleven years, from 15 A.D. to 26 A.D. It was Gratus who appointed Caiaphas and Annas to the High Priesthood in Jerusalem, and worked to sway the Jews to a favorable view of the Romans. The High Priests were chosen because of their pro-Roman position. When Pilate was assigned to Judea in 26 A.D. he made no changes to the High Priesthood because he found in Caiaphas a man who was supportive of Roman interests. Pilate was a Roman citizen likely born in Italy. His rise politically is un-documented but he had influential friends, notably one Lucius Aelius Sejanus, a patron of his. Sejanus was a Roman statesman, son of Sejus Strabo, Praetorian prefect. When his father went to Egypt as governor, Sejanus succeeded to the command of the Praetorian Guard and obtained great ascendancy over Emperor Tiberius. He was suspected of conspiring (A.D. 23) with Livilla in a successful plot to poison her husband, the emperor's son Drusus. He obtained (A.D. 29) the arrest of Agrippina the Elder. Tiberius, who feared that he was plotting against him, put Sejanus to death.

Pilate was given the post in Judea at a rather young age, about 25 years old. We know from the Gospels that he was married, and the gospels are rather neutral regarding his character. Others, like Philo of Alexandria were bitter critics of Pilate and saw him as a brutal, nasty character. Others saw him in a more sympathetic light and attributed to him honor based on unsubstantiated stories of his later conversion to Christianity. Of his life after his governorship ended we have no reliable information.

His rule in Judea began in 26, just a few years before Jesus was brought before him for Judgment. His immediate supervisor was supposed to be the Roman governor of Syria, but Tiberius, though having appointed L. Aelius Lamia to the post, kept him in Rome for the first six years of Pilate's rule. Then Lucius Vitellius was appointed as legate in Syria. Pilate had authority over Judea, Samaria, the Trans-Jordan and the territory as far South as Gaza on the West and The Dead Sea on the East. At the beginning of his rule, he thought to continue the policies of Gratus in persuading the Jews to accept Roman oversight. But instead, Pilate outraged the Jews by sending soldiers in Jerusalem bearing various Roman standards with inscriptions and portraits the Jews considered

idolatrous. When the Jewish resistance was so strong as to border on a riot, Pilate reversed his policy. Pilate's lack of wisdom and planning showed him as an impulsive and weak leader.

Another poor decision on Pilate's part was to offer the Jews an aqueduct to help supply water to a growing city. The Jews welcomed this idea, but revolted when Pilate forcibly removed the "Corban" treasure from the temple to pay for it. Pilate's soldiers killed many Jews in quelling the riot. This may be the event described in Luke 13:1-2. Pilate had fences to mend, and his capitulation to Jewish demands regarding Jesus may have been one way to accomplish this.

Now when it came to the time of Stephen's execution, we do not have an exact picture of the calendar as it relates to the activities of all the principals involved, so some conjecture is necessary. For example, we do not know exactly what year Jesus was crucified and exactly how old He was, let alone the day, month and year He was born. We do know (by modern calendar) when Pilate's rule began and ended. He began his rule in 26 and it continued until 36 A.D. By research, according to this calendar, we can set Jesus birth at around 6 B.C. during the rule of Herod the Great. We know Jesus began His ministry at about 30 years of age. This would roughly be at the same time Pilate began his rule, give or take a year or so. Pilate would have been a few years younger than Jesus. Jesus ministry is assumed to be around three to three and a half years, though some give it less duration. So with these sketchy details we can place Jesus confrontation with Pilate around 26 to 29 A.D. Another fact we don't have is the length of time from The Day of Pentecost to the stoning of Stephen, though it is clear that at least two to three years have passed, and if we assume the following as to why there was little Roman presence when Stephen was (illegally) stoned, we would have to add in another year or two somewhere.

The reason for the previous outline is that there was more than one time when Pilate was not in Jerusalem, and one significant time when many of his soldiers were absent also. First, Pilate had a residence at Caesarea on the coast, and frequently spent time there away from the city. Second, in the year prior to his being recalled to Rome, there was a conflict in Samaria he addressed with his troops and possibly his own presence, a conflict that brought about his own ruin. It seems that some Samaritan had put forth the claim that Moses had hidden or buried many gold objects on the top of Mt. Gerizim. This claim, of course, was ignorant and fallacious because Moses never entered Canaan. But, due to fanaticism and foolishness, a great multitude of Samaritans gathered at the foot of the mountain to ascend it and search for the treasures. To avoid others competing with them, they armed themselves. The word got to Pilate that armed Samaritans were assembling for some insurrection. Pilate dispatched a large contingent of soldiers to put down this insurrection and may have attended the scene himself. A great number of Samaritans were killed and a compliant was filed by the survivors with Pilate's superior, the Legate of Syria, Lucius Vitellius.

Vitellius removed Pilate from his office and ordered him to go to Rome to stand trial before Tiberius. This was in 36 A.D. However, Tiberius died in March of 37, just prior to Pilate's arrival and Pilate escaped trial due to Tiberius' death. Pilate fades into time as nothing reliable is known of him after this. Meanwhile, Vitellius appointed his friend Marcellus to temporarily govern Judea, and after a welcome reception, both men gave their attention to other political matters elsewhere as ordered and little scrutiny was paid to Jerusalem.

It is plausible that during these years that the Jews had a relatively free hand in dealing with the "religious disturbances" among them, nothing the Romans "had to spend their time worrying about". So it is possible that the persecution and illegal murder of Stephen and others took place in relative freedom without fear of Roman interference.

As a matter of record, Herod Agrippa I was Procurator from 41-44, his son from 44-48, and then Publius Ventilius Cumanus from 48-52 who was disgraced and replaced by Antonius Felix from

52-60 followed by Porcius Festus from 60-62. Of the eight Prelates mentioned in this excursus, the New Testament mentions five.

END OF EXCURSUS

Chapter eight

8:1

8:1: "Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles."

1: Luke introduces the central figure of his narrative after having described Saul's involvement in one of the most brazen and horrendous acts of the time. Saul was a noted Rabbi and had been a Rabbinic student under Gamaliel. His consent was tantamount to high-level authority giving permission to kill Stephen. Gamaliel's advice (since now the Pharisees on the council were also incensed) was disregarded even by himself and Saul, and an all out effort to eradicate every speck of this "heresy" was instituted. This scattering fulfills Acts 1:8, albeit in an unexpected way (also see 11:19).

8:2-4

2: *Some* devout men buried Stephen, and made loud lamentation over him. 3: But Saul *began* ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison. 4: Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word.

2: "Devout men". Pious Jews who knew Stephen, because they: 1. "buried him" - a formal funeral, and 2. "made loud lamentation over him", literally, "beat their breasts", a traditional display of mourning showing honor to the deceased.

3: "Ravaging the church" – that is the people of Christ's "Way". Saul was in a rage, no doubt partly due to being out matched when Stephen muted the "synagogue of Cilicia" of which Saul was a part (see: 6:9). Saul's "victory" over Stephen gave him boldness to attack the rest of the believers. Wrecking havoc from house to house, Saul, like a "wild animal" (as the Greek suggests) literally dragged off both men and women to prison seeking their death thereby.

Later, Paul would carry the guilt and regret of what he had done and it never left him. In his speech at Jerusalem in Acts 22:4 he notes, "I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons..." Before Agrippa he said, "And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them". (Acts 26:10) To the Corinthians he wrote, "For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God" (I Corinthians 15:9). To the church in Galatia he noted, "For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it"... (Galatians 1:13) But he also used his own acts as a demonstration of God's grace for any who would come to Christ. I Timothy 1:12-16, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into

service, even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are *found* in Christ Jesus. It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost *of all*. Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life”.

4: Reiterates verse 1. The persecution forced disciples to get out into the world to preach the word (and bring clarity and correction to the gatherings of believers throughout the empire). The apostles remaining in Jerusalem brought encouragement to the church and the believers became an “underground church”.

8:5-8

5: Philip went down to the city of Samaria and *began* proclaiming Christ to them. 6: The crowds with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing. 7: For *in the case of* many who had unclean spirits, they were coming out *of them* shouting with a loud voice; and many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed. 8: So there was much rejoicing in that city.

5: Not the Apostle Phillip, but one of the chosen “deacons”. The apostles remained in Jerusalem (8:1) for a time. Phillip is named second after Stephen (6:5) and so listed because he became the second most prominent. After Stephen, the remaining six may have been selected for continued persecution through “guilt by association”. So they left Jerusalem and the apostles remained picking up their former duties or choosing more men to help. Meanwhile, Philip went north to Samaria to proclaim the message of salvation. This is his first missionary journey, and it is to those many considered the “despised” and “unworthy”.

6-7: He was well received, perhaps due to Jesus preparing the way previously, (John 4:5 ff.) and also due to his probably being a Greek speaking or Hellenistic Jew. The “signs he was performing” no doubt God authenticated Philip’s message through these casting out of demons, healings and other mighty works of the Kingdom.

8: The impact that God cares for the Samaritans is powerfully demonstrated through a Jew and brings great joy to the Samaritans who had been led to believe, by the Jews, that they had been rejected.

8:9-11

9: “Now there was a man named Simon, who formerly was practicing magic in the city and astonishing the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone great; 10: and they all, from smallest to greatest, were giving attention to him, saying, "This man is what is called the Great Power of God." 11: And they were giving him attention because he had for a long time astonished them with his magic arts”.

9: Simon had prominence in the city. He was a Magi, either a Jew learned in the ways of Persian Magi, or a Jew originally from Persia, or a Persian. The text suggests that he was not a native

Samaritan but had come into the city from another place. The name “Simon” has the same root as “Simeon” or Samuel” and means, “God has heard” or “God listens”.

The word used for “magician” is “Magos” and is only found elsewhere in the New Testament in Matthew 2:1, ff. and Acts 13:6-8. It refers to the “arts” of the Medians and Persians founded by Zarathrushtira (Zoroaster) in the sixth century B.C.. In Acts 13, the title is applied to “Elymas” of Cyprus who stood opposed to Saul (Paul) and Barnabas on their first missionary journey. (See notes on 13:8, ff.)

10-11: Simon had been astonishing people of Samaria (in the Greek these people are “besides themselves with wonder”) with his “art”. His art probably consisted of unusual teachings (possibly Gnostic), “insights” coming from fortune telling, astrology, or the interpretation of dreams, and he may have exercised the role of a priest, as the “Magi” were priests of Zoroaster. Also included in the bag of tricks of the “Magi” were conjuring or necromancy as a medium, charms and incantations.

These “magicians” were educated and persuasive. But Philo (A Jewish philosopher of Alexandria during this era) compares them vipers, scorpions and other venomous creatures. He calls them charlatans, and parasites who prey upon the uneducated, poor, ignorant and gullible of the city.

Simon had called himself or accepted the title “Great Power of God”. A similar title the people of Lystra attempted to heap upon Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:11-14), which they promptly rejected.

8:12-13

12: “But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike. 13: Even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip, and as he observed signs and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed.

12-13: Simon witnesses the real thing and is impressed. His motives for following Phillip become suspect in spite of the fact it is said that he “believed” and was “baptized”. The “amazer” is himself “amazed” (same word as “astonished”) primarily because Philip’s ministry is not fraudulent but genuine.

8:14-17

14: Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, 15: who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. 16: For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 17: Then they *began* laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit.

14-17: Peter’s first “missionary journey”. Why was this done or even necessary? Why had not the Holy Spirit fallen upon them as it did in Jerusalem? Was it to confirm to both the people and the apostles that indeed the Samaritans, of all people, were accepted into the Kingdom of God? There is no question that when the Holy Spirit fell upon these people that the minds of the apostles were opened even more to God’s intent to include the world in His salvation. Christ had defined the nature of the kingdom of God, as well as to the extent of the application of His own death. Peter’s

education in this matter is a life long process for him (Note: All of Acts chapter 10, Galatians 2:11-21, II Peter 3:16). The Apostles witness of this event would be compelling to the rest in Jerusalem. This occurrence among the Samaritans begins to introduce the possibility that God has included the Gentiles also. There is no mention of tongues here as an “evidence” of the Spirit’s infilling, yet some evidence was forthcoming as witnessed by the apostles. This is the first mention of “laying on of hands” for this purpose (See: note on 6:6 and compare Acts 19:1-7)

8:18-24

18: Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, 19: saying, "Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." 20: But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! 21: "You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. 22: "Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you. 23: "For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity." 24: But Simon answered and said, "Pray to the Lord for me yourselves, so that nothing of what you have said may come upon me."

18-19: What did Simon see? Could it have been the “speaking in tongues” or other examples of power or boldness in the Samaritans? It appears that Simon desired to add this “power” to his own repertoire enhancing his own position in the city. From this passage we get the term “simony”, denoting trafficking in sacred things, but chiefly the purchase of ecclesiastical offices. Later, the crime of buying or selling ecclesiastical preferment; or the corrupt presentation of anyone to an ecclesiastical benefit of money or reward became forbidden in the church. In England, by Stat. 31 Elizabeth, c. 6. severe penalties are enacted against this crime. Apparently Simon was not filled with the Holy Spirit or he would have known the gift and power thereof.

20: The offer of money was a terrible insult to Peter and it infuriated him because Simon assumes gift of God is able to be purchased with money. Peter likely thought of the real price in Christ’s suffering and death it cost to receive freely the gift of God. This is close to what Peter said to Ananias and Sapphira except that Simon was right out front with it. What Peter is saying is, “Your silver be with you when you perish”. What is revealing is that Simon saw the Holy Spirit powerfully filling the Samaritans without cost. All he had to do was submit himself to the apostles to be so imbued. But that wasn’t his goal. He wanted to have the prestige and authority of the apostles. The people were no longer flocking to him and were instead giving attention to Phillip, Peter and John. He apparently didn’t care about spiritual matters at all.

21: In other words, “The power of the Holy Spirit is neither yours to experience, nor are you allowed to have any role in the ministry of the gospel. You are excluded from this in every possible way”. Simon’s problem was, as usual, his heart. In other words, his motive. It was not “right” or “righteous” before God but corrupt.

22: Peter’s words put Simon on the very brink of disaster. God might not even cleanse his heart but if sincere contrition and repentance is accomplished, Simon has a chance. In Christ, our sins are forgiven, past, present and future. We need not focus on trying to gain “more forgiveness”. The forensic act is finished and accomplished and applies to every true believer in Christ. But if we are to focus on one key spiritual matter, it would be our own hearts. In all sincerity, we, when recognizing it, need to implore God to deal with our hearts from which come all sorts of evil (Psalm

51 may be in Peter's mind here.) The alternative is to be shut out of spiritual giftedness and ministry.

23: Deuteronomy 29:14-29 comes to mind here, which deals with a curse on idolaters. Simon's condition is that of being poisoned by the bitterness (of his heart) and bound with a chain of unrighteousness (that is, a slave to unrighteousness). His bitterness is in not being able to have the power and recognition the apostles have (perhaps this is his idolatry). His enslavement is to the personal aggrandizement he covets. He is double minded. On the one hand he professes faith and the desire to follow Christ as Lord and learn from the apostles. On the other hand he seeks to enhance his own position in Samaria. The outcome of this is not pleasant because he tries to do both when he ought to have shed himself of his past and his position and burned that bridge becoming a no-name follower of the apostles and their teaching. But he chose to attempt both and in the process lost both.

God alone can heal and release him, but Peter lets him know it is a slim hope considering his condition. 24: Simon's response recognizes the ineffectiveness of his own prayer as he asks Peter to pray for him, but does not respond to the challenge of Peter to repent and seek God's forgiveness in his heart. He seems only interested in averting disaster upon himself. Tradition has never looked with favor upon Simon's life thereafter, and have attributed to him all sorts of convoluted teachings and movements. Is this a case of "rocky soil" or was Simon ever really a true believer?

But that may not be the real issue here for Luke. It is suggested that in the case of both Ananias, Sapphira and Simon that the issue is the nature and character of the church and its leadership. These events are employed by Luke to clearly point out what Christ's sacrifice meant and how sacred the new believing saints were to God. No one knew that better than Peter and he was not about to allow deceiving, conniving hearts into the leadership of this precious work. It must be noted, however, that these people force one to take a hard look at one's own heart and motive and brings contrition when the Holy Spirit points out matters of the heart that need addressing.

8:25-29

25: "So, when they had solemnly testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they started back to Jerusalem, and were preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans. 26: But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, "Get up and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a desert *road*.) 27: So he got up and went; and there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship, 28: and he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah. 29: Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go up and join this chariot."

25-26: The second missionary journey of Phillip is directed by "An angel of the Lord" (see note on: 5:19). It is hard to determine if Phillip was still in Samaria or had returned to Jerusalem ("get up"- was he resting?). The former is more likely due to the language and the persecution that still was raging in the city. The road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza was a little used and desolate road as opposed to the direct westerly trade route. This is due to the sparseness of water along its route, even though it is a more direct route to the Southern trade route, a short cut if you will.

Phillip could reach that road without going through Jerusalem. Apparently Gaza had been once destroyed by Alexander Jannaeus, a Jew (son of John Hyrcanus) and early king of Judea in the line

of the Maccabees. He destroyed Gaza and many surrounding cities in his zeal to crush out remaining Syrian influence. From his line came his granddaughter Mariamne who was one of the wives of Herod The Great. The city was rebuilt nearby by the Romans. but the road through it was still in heavy use. (note: Zephaniah 2:4, “For Gaza will be abandoned And Ashkelon a desolation; Ashdod will be driven out at noon And Ekron will be uprooted.” (7th century B.C.)

27: Phillip comes across another of the “rejected”, “unclean”, “unworthy” persons. First he was a Gentile from Ethiopia, of the upper Nile region of Africa, and likely a Nubian. And, second, he was an eunuch (a male chosen to serve female officials as bodyguards, helpers of physical strength and so on, and were castrated to keep them from making sexual advances on the women they served. Often the mothers of ruling officials were cared for and guarded by eunuchs. A man became a eunuch in one of two ways. He was either forcibly castrated due to being a criminal or born of undesirable parentage, or voluntarily made eunuchs to serve for high reward, which seems to be the case in our text. This eunuch was a high official, the treasurer, in the court of the Queen – called “Candace” a name often adopted by these queens - and was well compensated. Some men also voluntarily had themselves castrated out of religious convictions. Note Jesus words:

Matthew 5:28-30, 28: “...but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29: "If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. 30: "If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell.”

Speaking about divorce Jesus mentions eunuchs:

Matthew 19:10-12, 10: “The disciples said to Him, "If the relationship of the man with his wife is like this, it is better not to marry." 11: But He said to them, "Not all men *can* accept this statement, but *only* those to whom it has been given. 12: "For there are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb; and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men; and there are *also* eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to accept *this*, let him accept *it*.”

This eunuch had come to Jerusalem as a pilgrim, not as a proselyte, but as a “God Fearing Gentile”. He could never become a Jewish proselyte because of his inability to reproduce. He had come to Jerusalem to worship. We don’t know what feast or celebration brought him thus, but likely it was a major festival. It is unlikely he came alone, but probably had several attendants with him, and at least we know he had a driver (Note: 8:38). His attendance at Jerusalem fulfills a prophecy:

9: "For then I will give to the peoples purified lips, That all of them may call on the name of the LORD, To serve Him shoulder to shoulder. 10: "From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia My worshipers, My dispersed ones, Will bring My offerings.” Zephaniah 3:9-10

28: Returning from his pilgrimage, the eunuch was sitting up in his chariot (not a warrior’s vehicle, but a likely a four wheeled cart able to transport several passengers and cargo in a modicum of comfort). He was reading from the prophet Isaiah, and the rendering tells us he was reading the Septuagint. Now it is the Spirit and not an angel that prompts Phillip to approach the chariot.

8:30-33

30: "Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" 31: And he said, "Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. 32: Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this: "HE WAS LED AS A SHEEP TO SLAUGHTER; AND AS A LAMB BEFORE ITS SHEARER IS SILENT, SO HE DOES NOT OPEN HIS MOUTH. 33: "IN HUMILIATION HIS JUDGMENT WAS TAKEN AWAY; WHO WILL RELATE HIS GENERATION? FOR HIS LIFE IS REMOVED FROM THE EARTH."

30-31: The eunuch was reading out loud, perhaps to those accompanying him. This was a common practice. Phillip overheard the reading and understood it because it was in Greek (Note comment on 6:5). Phillip and the eunuch spoke Greek, and it is no coincidence that God sent a Greek speaking Jew to interpret a Greek passage in the Old Testament to a Gentile foreigner. So he asked the eunuch if he understood what it meant, and the eunuch invited Phillip up into the chariot to discuss it with him. Phillip had no qualms about getting into a chariot with an "unclean" person. After he did so, the chariot continued to travel down the road, driven by a servant of the eunuch while he and Phillip discussed the passage.

32-33: The passage is a portion from Isaiah 53:7-8, and it is the first time this passage is attributed to Christ in the temporal framework of the history and writing of the New Testament.

8:34-35

34: "The eunuch answered Philip and said, "Please *tell me*, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of someone else?" 35: Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him."

34-35: Indicates that this passage had been understood by the early church as pertaining to Jesus as the fulfillment of the "Suffering Servant" of Isaiah 53. Phillip spent a lot of time with the eunuch "preaching Jesus" because, from the time of the outset of the discussion, it concludes with the eunuch wishing to be baptized. It would have taken some time as well as answering a lot of question for the eunuch to come to this point. Phillip "opened his mouth" and began at Isaiah 53. The words "opened his mouth" usually precede a lengthy discourse (Matthew 5:2).

8:36-38

36: "As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?" 37: [And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."] 38: And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him."

36: The water source mentioned here is difficult to identify geographically since both the eunuch's and Phillip's path is uncertain. But he could have met him near Mareshah, as it is a crossroads of two roads, one from the north and one from Jerusalem. There is also a small river (or "wadi") that empties into the Mediterranean at Azotus. Interestingly, Mareshah is mentioned in II Chronicles 14 in conjunction with another Ethiopian. "Now Zerah the Ethiopian came out against them with an army of a million men and 300 chariots, and he came to Mareshah. So Asa

went out to meet him, and they drew up in battle formation in the valley of Zephathah at Mareshah.” (14:9-10)

37: This verse is not in the earliest copies of the Book. It begins to appear in Greek minuscules around 900 A.D. It may have been included from a marginal note made by a lecturer as he amplified the event in an evangelistic message. It certainly reflects the foundation for baptism in the early church and may have been added to underscore that very point.

38: This demonstrates that “baptism”, translated into English from the Greek βαπτίζω, “baptidzo” fulfills its definition, “to dip into” or “immerse”. Otherwise, all Phillip would have had to do was dip a cup into the water and pour or sprinkle it over the eunuch’s head. However, both “pour” and “sprinkle” have their own Greek words which are not used here or in any text where “baptism” is mentioned. Here they go down into the water and come back up out of it. Paul describes the significance of “Christian” baptism as opposed to “Jewish” baptism in Romans 6.

8:39-40

39: “When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch no longer saw him, but went on his way rejoicing. 40: But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he kept preaching the gospel to all the cities until he came to Caesarea.”

39: “Snatched Phillip away”. The word is “ἀρπαζω”, meaning to take away (pluck or pull away) by force. A work of “The Spirit of the Lord”. There are references to this act of the Spirit in other places: I Kings 18:12; II Kings 2:16 (describing Elijah’s ascent into the whirlwind); Ezekiel 3:12, 14; 8:3; 11:1, 24; 43:5; I Corinthians 12:2; Revelation 4:1-2; 17:3; 21:10.

40: Phillip’s third missionary journey. Phillip looked about and saw that he was in Azotus (ancient Ashdod of the Philistines). From there he began preaching city to city up the coast to Caesarea, over 50 miles on foot. We hear no more of Phillip until some twenty years later. He is still in Caesarea, base for his evangelistic outreach. Note Acts 21:8-10, “On the next day we left and came to Caesarea, and entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him. 9: Now this man had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses.”⁹

Chapter nine

9:1-2

1: “Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, 2: and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.”

⁹ From Paul’s comment in I Corinthians 9:5, it is quite possible that Phillip, as well as Peter, had their wives accompany them on their journeys. Women are seldom mentioned unless they played a significant role in ministry or were the subject of the narrative. Phillip took up permanent residence at Caesarea and we see that his wife and daughters were there. Vincent references Stanley and makes the observation that having wives accompany them would have assisted when it came to ministering to and baptizing new female converts. This may well have led to the formation of “deaconesses” later in the church and the ministry of “widows” Paul mentions in I Timothy 5.

1: Saul was from Tarsus in Cilicia. Tarsus was a cosmopolitan trade city with a large Hellenistic Jewish population. Saul identified with those Hellenistic Jews in 5:9 and may have been a part of the debate his fellow countrymen had with Stephen. By the time of Christ, Tarsus already had a 2000 year history. In 67 B.C., Tarsus was made the capital city of Cilicia due to its prominence. It received the favor of Mark Antony in 41 B.C. because of its opposition to Cassius who had Julius Caesar murdered. When Antony visited Tarsus, Cleopatra joined him at Tarsus, sailing up the Cydnus River in splendor as a second “Aphrodite”. As a trade route center, Tarsus was not only wealthy but had strategic importance in times of war. Many emperors stayed there and the city boasted of a university as well as all the fine art and athletic structures. Saul was born a free man and a Roman Citizen likely due to his father’s close ties to wealthy families. As a Hellenistic Jew he would be bi-lingual or even tri-lingual and, as educated in the university and in Jerusalem under Gamaliel, able to read and write in several languages as well notably Greek, Latin and Hebrew. He was very proud of his heritage and learning.

2: In going to the high priest, he sought written authority to extradite those belonging to “The Way” and bring them back in bonds to Jerusalem. The Romans had given the high priest the right of extraditing to Jerusalem any Jewish malefactors who had fled the country (See I Maccabees 15:15-24). This would cover any Jewish Christians who had fled to Damascus. “The Way” was one of the first titles of the Christian movement. The term is used six times (in Acts; 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22) and probably comes from the expression “The Way of Salvation”, “The Way of The Lord” or “The Way of Life”. See Acts 16:17; 18:25-26. For example, in 5:20, the angel told Peter and John to “Go, stand and speak to the people in the temple the whole message of this Life.”

9:3-6

3: “As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; 4: and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” 5: And he said, “Who are You, Lord?” And He *said*, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, 6: but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do.”

3: As this story is told and retold by Paul in later years, we find out more information. For example, in 22:6, Paul notes that this happened around “noontime” In 26:13 Paul confirms that it was “at midday”. He also notes in 26:13 that the light was, “brighter than the Sun shining all around me and those who were journeying with me.”

4: A fine example of personification used by Jesus. To persecute the church is to personally persecute the Lord as the church is His body. 26:14 adds, “And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’”

5: A second parallel personification. Acts 22:8 adds, “And I answered, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And He said to me, ‘I am Jesus *the Nazarene*, whom you are persecuting.’” (Italics for illustration purposes) What prompted Saul to respond to the voice with the title “Lord”? Is it possible that all along Saul knew deep down that this new movement was indeed God’s work? Or was it the magnitude of the experience that moved him thus?

6: Damascus, a large provincial city and the capital of Syria, as it is today, lying about 150 miles from Jerusalem. It had a large Jewish population and it appears that many escaping the persecution

in Jerusalem may have tried to find refuge there.

9:7-9

7: "The men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. 8: Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus. 9: And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank."

7: Again we have additional material from Acts 22:9 where Paul notes that his companions, while standing speechless and hearing the voice but seeing no person, saw the light but did not understand the voice, possibly because it was in Hebrew.

8: Saul had been knocked to the ground. If on horseback, this was a hard fall. Then he was blinded immediately by the light, not blinded as unable to see, but to brightness so great that he could see nothing else while others were bathed in and observing the same light. Luke tells us that he then was led by the hand to Damascus by his companions. His "light" blindness may have turned to "dark" blindness by then but perhaps he still saw only a blinding brightness. Paul, in 22:10-11 is reported to have also said "And I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Get up and go on into Damascus, and there you will be told of all that has been appointed for you to do.' 11: "But since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me and came into Damascus.

In 26:16-18 the instructions of Jesus are expanded: 'But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; 17: rescuing you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, 18: to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.'

From these additional passages we know that Paul spoke at least three languages, possibly four; Greek, Aramaic, Hebrew and possibly Latin, at least literate in Latin if not able to converse therein.

9: Is it just coincidental that he was blind for three days not taking food or drink, paralleling Jesus time in the tomb? His friends had taken him to a house in Damascus owned by a man named Judas on a street called "Straight Street". Though buried beyond hope of excavation today, the alignment of this street is still locatable and runs East and West through the center of Damascus and is a stark contrast to the rest of the winding streets in the city. Until recently, in the Southeastern quarter of the city, there was a Jewish quarter that dated back to ancient times.

9:10-16

10: "Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and the Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." 11: And the Lord *said* to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying, 12: and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight." 13: But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to Your saints at Jerusalem; 14: and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name." 15: But the Lord said to

him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; 16: for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake."

10: Another "Ananias" (5;1ff.). A popular name, but the contrast in men is apparent. The Lord calls to Ananias and, like Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Samuel and others, he answers simply, "here I am".

11-14: Simple instructions caused Ananias some concern. He was one of the believers who was in jeopardy of being arrested and taken to Jerusalem for trial. The word of Saul's mission and authority from the chief priests reached Damascus before Saul himself did. Someone rode fast to warn the people. Ananias was understandably anxious. The Lord was patient with Ananias and gave him enough information that he felt confident enough to proceed on his mission.

15: Saul (Paul) fulfilled this commission completely. It is unusual for The Lord to note a specific "chosen vessel" underscoring how important Paul would be to the Lord in the spreading of the truth.

16: "Suffer". "That is, much he has done against that Name; but now, when I show him what great things he must suffer for that Name, he shall count it his honor and privilege."

The same Greek word for "suffer" is used of Jesus' suffering. Paul does not hesitate to list his sufferings in his letters as a testimony to the truth of what he preaches. In Philippians 1:29 Paul wrote, "For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake"

9:17-19

17: "So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." 18: And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he got up and was baptized; 19: and he took food and was strengthened. Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus",

17: Saul adds from Acts 22:12-16, "A certain Ananias, a man who was devout by the standard of the Law, *and* well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, 13: came to me, and standing near said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight!' And at that very time I looked up at him. 14: "And he said, 'The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear an utterance from His mouth. 15: 'For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard. 16: 'Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.'"

18-19: "Scales" – a flake not unlike the scales on a fish. The time spent in blindness was not wasted by Saul. It had to be a heart wrenching, soul searching, rethinking process. When told to be baptized, he complied immediately and then spent some time with disciples in Damascus. He thought a lot of things through and came to a positive faith and understanding.

9:20-22

20: “and immediately he *began* to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is the Son of God.” 21: All those hearing him continued to be amazed, and were saying, “Is this not he who in Jerusalem destroyed those who called on this name, and *who* had come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?” 22: But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this *Jesus* is the Christ.

20: After Saul spent some time with the disciples in Damascus he felt compelled to immediately begin to proclaim the truth that Jesus is indeed the Son of God. Seeing how he spoke in other passages, his personal experiences - both his severe persecution of the church and his encounter with Jesus - was the foundation for what he said and why he said it. The core of his message was Christ crucified and risen. He taught clearly that it was Jesus’ resurrection that confirmed His Lordship and identity as God’s Son. In Romans 1:4 for example, speaking of Jesus he states, “...who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord...” Saul’s message was that Jesus was the promised Messiah, the “Son of God” which the Messiah was known to be in the sense of being the earthly king (I Chronicles 22:10-11; 28:6). But Saul made it clear that Jesus was the actual offspring of God Himself and thus the complete and final fulfillment of all the promises of God.

21: Saul had completely reversed his position, now proclaiming the Lordship of Jesus in the very synagogues where he had meant to arrest those who professed their faith in him. His reversal and proclamation caused a great stir. The hearers were “amazed” (ἐξίστημι) or literally, “beside themselves” or “astonished”. They were in heated discussion over Saul and pondered what it meant.

22: Rather than be confounded - (συνγίνομαι) “perplex”, “throw into disorder”- as he was in chapter 6, he was now the “confounder”. He was able to prove through the scriptures that Jesus was indeed the long promised Messiah and those of a contrary opinion had no answer for him. Having once been blind, now he could see.

9:23-25

23: “When many days had elapsed, the Jews plotted together to do away with him, 24: but their plot became known to Saul. They were also watching the gates day and night so that they might put him to death; 25: but his disciples took him by night and let him down through *an opening in the wall*, lowering him in a large basket.”

23-24: Isn’t it interesting how divisive the truth can be? With no answer, and seeing their power dissolving away, the Jews resorted to a frequent tactic – “kill the preacher”! The “many days” could have included the three years that Saul, in Galatians 1:15-21, said he was in the desert in Arabia for a time before returning to Damascus. Note his words:

“But when God, who had set me apart *even* from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus. Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days. But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother. (Now

in what I am writing to you, I assure you before God that I am not lying.) Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.”

How long he spent in Arabia and what transpired there we do not know, but Arabia, in those days was adjacent to the territory of Damascus and Saul could have actually returned to the place of his encounter with Christ. We are uncertain.

25: Lowered through a window in the wall. This window may have been in a residence built on the city wall and thus there would be a window opening to the outside. Or, he may have been lowered from a window in a tower in the wall. The latter is more likely. He was lowered from this window to avoid passing through the city gates where awaited those who would seize him and put him to death. In II Corinthians 11:32-33 Paul notes, “In Damascus the ethnarch under Aretas the king was guarding the city of the Damascenes in order to seize me, and I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and *so* escaped his hands.” Saul then traveled to Jerusalem. According to Galatians 1:18, there was a three year interval between verse 25 and 26.

9:26-28

26: When he came to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. 27: But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus. 28: And he was with them, moving about freely in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord.

26-27: It was unlikely Saul traveled to Jerusalem alone. Could Barnabas have been with him as one of his companions? How did Barnabas know so much about what went on at Damascus? Could it have been Barnabas who brought word to believers in Damascus that Saul was on his way to arrest them? When brought to the apostles, the only ones he saw were Peter and James, (the brother of the Lord). The others were likely out of the city at the time.¹⁰

28: After his acquaintance with Peter and James, he was freely allowed to speak in the city.

9:29-31

29: “And he was talking and arguing with the Hellenistic *Jews*; but they were attempting to put him to death. 30: But when the brethren learned *of it*, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus. 31: So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.”

29: Saul, who was one of the Hellenistic Jews Stephen confronted and who had sought his death, is now in Stephen’s shoes. It must have been quite a passionate interchange between Saul and his fellow countrymen.

30: He was accompanied to Caesarea for protection and put on a ship heading to Tarsus. Saul’s trip to Tarsus at this time may have resulted in a disruption between him and his family. If still

¹⁰ See: Galatians 1:18-20

married at this time, the marriage may have been dissolved. He says he “suffered the loss of all things” when he came to Christ (Philippians 2:8). This juncture may also been the prelude to his returning to Antioch and than later setting out on his first missionary journey (Galatians 1:21). Luke puts in the ministries of Peter before continuing with the missionary journeys of Paul.

31: This verse hints that another possible severe persecution may have resulted had Saul stayed in Jerusalem as it had with Stephen who had riled up these same Jews. The church has been essentially “underground” since Saul’s days of persecution. Saul’s preaching began to bring the church to a public arena again and this was neither conducive to the advance of the gospel nor to the safety of the believers. But the church continued to grow, having peace from persecution. The ministry of the Holy Spirit is described here as “comfort”, possibly encouraging those who had suffered or lost someone in the persecution earlier.

9:32-35

32: “Now as Peter was traveling through all *those regions*, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda. 33: There he found a man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years, for he was paralyzed. 34: Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; get up and make your bed." Immediately he got up. 35: And all who lived at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord.

32: Peter’s second missionary journey. He was traveling throughout the regions named in verse 31, visiting believers.¹¹ Was this traveling outside of Judea in conjunction with Herod’s attempt to have him killed in 12:3, 17? When he came to Lydda (Lod in the Old Testament), a significant event occurred that caused a turning of many to Christ. As one travels West by Northwest from Jerusalem, about 15 miles out one first comes to Emmaus, then after continuing on for about 10 more miles then turning off the main road to the North two or three miles, one comes to Lydda. Lydda was a provincial capital.

33-34: Aeneas was a paralyzed man and had been so for eight years. The residents no doubt helped Peter find Aeneas. As Peter was visiting believers and said nothing to Aeneas by way of a sermon, Aeneas may well have been a believer. Peter simply pronounces him healed by Christ and commands him to get up and make his bed, which he promptly does.

35: There were not only people from the Judean district who witnessed the man’s healing but also some from the district of Sharon to the North. This event caused many to believe, and if we take Luke literally, everyone in these two districts turned to Christ in faith. However, the district of Sharon (the coastal plain) is vast, running some 50 miles from Joppa to Caesarea. The reference here may be to a liked named village near Lydda.

9:36-43

36: “Now in Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which translated *in Greek* is called Dorcas); this woman was abounding with deeds of kindness and charity which she continually did. 37: And it happened at that time that she fell sick and died; and when they had washed her body, they laid it in an upper room. 38: Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, having heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him, imploring him, "Do not delay in coming to us." 39: So Peter arose and went with them. When he arrived, they brought him into the upper room;

¹¹ See footnote on 8:40, page 50 regarding wives accompanying the apostles on their missionary journeys.

and all the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing all the tunics and garments that Dorcas used to make while she was with them. 40: But Peter sent them all out and knelt down and prayed, and turning to the body, he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up. 41: And he gave her his hand and raised her up; and calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive. 42: It became known all over Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. 43: And Peter stayed many days in Joppa with a tanner *named* Simon."

36: Peter, after staying some time in Lydda, was visited by two disciples from Joppa who implored him to come to their city. So Peter packs up and travels some twelve miles west to Joppa on the Mediterranean coast. Joppa was the Old Testament city of Japho, actually a Canaanite city. In Peter's day, it was the main seaport of Jerusalem and still exists today as Jaffa, a suburb of Tel Aviv, but lies buried under the modern city. Peter was summoned to the resting place of a dead woman named Tabitha (or Dorcas).

37: Dorcas' name means "Gazelle" and she had been kind and generous, showing Christian love to the entire town. During her ministry, she became ill and succumbed to the illness and died. Those women ("widows" – verse 39) who were close to her took her body and prepared her for burial according to the prescribed rituals.

38: It was already known to the believers in Joppa that Peter was nearby at Lydda. At the death of Dorcas, the two men were dispatched immediately to Lydda to summon Peter. They had only three days to accomplish this or Dorcas would have to be buried. Twelve miles is a day's walk. Their haste indicates they were seeking Peter to come and pray over Dorcas that she might be raised from the dead.

39: Peter's response was prompt. He accompanied them to Joppa and was taken to the upper room, a place outside of the normal living quarters, and likely Dorcas's work area. Peter was introduced to Dorcas through the women who showed him her work, no doubt to inform him of how precious this woman was to all the city.

40-42: Peter sent them all out of the room. This was in the manner of Jesus who only wanted close family and Peter and John present when Jairus' daughter was raised from the dead (Mark 5:40; Luke 8:51). Peter had been at all three occasions when Jesus had raised someone from the dead. Peter knelt down and prayed. This was the first time he had faced a dead person alone and there is little doubt he sought the Lord fervently. Once he had prayed he turned to the body (indicating that he prayed toward some other direction) and simply spoke the words "Tabitha arise". She was made alive, breathing and whole by the power of God. Opening her eyes and seeing Peter, she sat up. Peter then presented her alive to her companions and the word of her resurrection spread to the surrounding city and many believed.

43: An interesting place for Peter to stay. The fact that Simon is mentioned as a tanner is not simply to be informative or to set Simon apart from other men with the common name of Simon, including Peter. A scrupulous Jew would never enter the house of a person who was in the business of treating the skins of dead animals rendering himself and his environment "unclean" according to Jewish law. Note Leviticus 5:2, and 7:21 for example, "Or if a person touches any unclean thing, whether a carcass of an unclean beast or the carcass of unclean cattle or a carcass of unclean swarming things, though it is hidden from him and he is unclean, then he will be guilty." 7:21, "When anyone touches anything unclean, whether human uncleanness, or an unclean animal, or any unclean detestable thing, and eats of the flesh of the sacrifice of peace offerings which belong to the

LORD, that person shall be cut off from his people.” There are many more regulations of like manner.

So what prompted Peter to stay with Simon many days (several weeks or months)? Was it the Lord? We don't know. But this could have been good preparation for what was to follow.

Chapter Ten

10:1-8

1: “Now *there was* a man at Caesarea named Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian cohort, 2: a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, and gave many alms to the *Jewish* people and prayed to God continually. 3: About the ninth hour of the day he clearly saw in a vision an angel of God who had *just* come in and said to him, "Cornelius!" 4: And fixing his gaze on him and being much alarmed, he said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him, "Your prayers and alms have ascended as a memorial before God. 5: "Now dispatch *some* men to Joppa and send for a man *named* Simon, who is also called Peter; 6: he is staying with a tanner *named* Simon, whose house is by the sea." 7: When the angel who was speaking to him had left, he summoned two of his servants and a devout soldier of those who were his personal attendants, 8: and after he had explained everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.

1: Caesarea is on the coast of Israel some 22 miles South of Mt. Carmel, 35 miles North of Joppa and 70 miles Northwest of Jerusalem. It was originally a small port built in the 4th century B.C. by Strato, King of Sidon, and called Strato's Tower or Straton. In the Maccabean period, it was captured by Alexander Jannaeus c.96 B.C. from the Syrians. In 63 B.C., the City was declared free by Pompey and when Augustus took the throne, he gave it to Herod the Great in 24 B.C. Herod had been Governor of Galilee since 47 B.C. and had done a remarkable job and was given Syria and ultimately Judea.

In honor of Caesar Augustus, Herod rebuilt the City over 12 years and named it after Caesar Augustus. It had no natural harbor so Herod had a unique and major construction project designed and built and named the magnificent harbor “Sebastos” in honor of Augustus, (Sebastos meaning “Augustus”). Jerusalem was the capital as far as the Jews were concerned, but Caesarea soon became the provincial capital, and central seaport of the nation. The Roman governors had their residence there as did the Roman garrison. Fresh water was transported by aqueduct from springs near the foot of Mt. Carmel, some 22 miles to the North. This aqueduct served the area for a thousand years before it was allowed to disintegrate by the Muslims.

It was from Caesarea Pilate set out for the Passover Feast during which he condemned Jesus to crucifixion. Recently, a stone bearing Pontius Pilate's name was excavated in Caesarea putting to rest those critics who claimed he was a mythical person. Here also was Paul held in prison by governors Festus and Felix before going to Rome by ship to appeal his case before Nero.

Caesarea, though a pagan city, had a strong Jewish minority. After the ministry of Phillip, Peter and Paul's there, the city became a Christian center until the Muslims invaded in 640 and by 1265 the city had been destroyed and ransacked. No doubt Cornelius had a key role in this transformation.

Cornelius was a Centurion (Commander over a hundred soldiers) in the Italian “Cohort”. This Cohort was comprised of some 600 men and 200 cavalry, a tenth of a full Roman legion. These troops were stationed on the frontiers in small forts, usually four to six acres in size. An ancient Syrian coin commemorates an Italian Cohort at Caesarea.

2: Cornelius is described as a “devout man” who feared God with all his household, and gave many alms to the *Jewish* people and prayed to God continually. This means he was a worshipper of the God of the Jews, a “God fearer” as these people were called, but not a proselyte. That is, he remained un-circumcised and did not observe the food laws and other cultic observances. He, like the Centurion who loved the people of Capernaum and helped build their synagogue, gave money liberally to the people there in Caesarea and prayed to God continually (note verse 22). He was a perfect individual to help spread the truth of the gospel in the capital city. He had the respect of the Jews as well as the Gentiles.

3: The ninth hour – around three P.M., the hour that began the evening sacrifice. Cornelius chose to pray at these times following Jewish practices. What he prayed about is revealed in the following verses. A “vision” is not some dream or mental image Biblically, but a “sighting” (in contrast with Peter’s “vision” later in this chapter). How do we know it was a divine messenger? Verse 30 tells us. In this case, it was a clear sighting (indicating Cornelius was awake) of a man in shining garments entering the place where Cornelius was praying. And as Cornelius was in a prayerful state, the angel addressed him by name.

4-6: Cornelius’ eyes were fixed on the messenger meaning he saw nothing else while at the same time he was terrified, not just alarmed. For a Centurion, this was a very disturbing experience beyond anything he had ever encountered before. His response was simple, “What is it, Lord?” The angel mentions both his prayers and his generosity. No doubt the key here is his heart’s motive for both. The angel calls them a sacred memorial before God. Cornelius’ prayers are set against the Jewish sacrifices now beginning in the Temple at that time of day. The words, “have ascended as a memorial before God”, portray the smoke of sacrifice as a “memorial to the Lord” as spoken of in Leviticus, chapter two and other related passages. While the Jews’ sacrifice is often a means of trying to manipulate the Lord, or the giving alms a means to be seen of others, Cornelius’ prayers and almsgiving are from a pure heart.

The only other instance in the New Testament where this description of a person’s deeds are described this way is by Jesus about the act of Mary of Bethany after anointing Jesus with pure nard. (Mat_26:13; Mar_14:9). “Truly I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory (or “a memorial”) of her.”

The angel closes with a hint of what was at the heart of Cornelius’ prayers when he says, 5: “Now dispatch *some* men to Joppa and send for a man *named* Simon, who is also called Peter; 6: he is staying with a tanner *named* Simon, whose house is by the sea.” This suggests that Cornelius was a truth seeker and wanted to know the Lord in ways beyond the traditional Jewish presentation. By chapter’s end, we know the heart and prayer of this man. Simon’s house was adjacent to the Mediterranean. It was important for the tanning process that ample water be available. There are still tanneries along the coast today.

7: Cornelius sends three men to Joppa, some 35 miles to the South to find Peter. Two of the men are his personal servants and a soldier is picked who, with them, shares Cornelius’ own spiritual convictions, “a devout soldier” (also, see verse 22). This is the same term used of Cornelius in

verse 2 of this chapter. However, the term devout as applied to the soldier may also be understood as one who would protect the servants and the mission with his life.

8: Cornelius could only explain the entire event to men who were of a similar faith and heart. They left early the next morning (verse 9) after procuring supplies and horses. The 35 miles to Joppa by horse back could be covered three to four hours by horseback, arriving about the time mentioned in the next passage.

10:9-16

9: "On the next day, as they were on their way and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. 10: But he became hungry and was desiring to eat; but while they were making preparations, he fell into a trance; 11: and he saw the sky opened up, and an object like a great sheet coming down, lowered by four corners to the ground, 12: and there were in it all *kinds of* four-footed animals and crawling creatures of the earth and birds of the air. 13: A voice came to him, "Get up, Peter, kill and eat!" 14: But Peter said, "By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything unholy and unclean." 15: Again a voice *came* to him a second time, "What God has cleansed, no *longer* consider unholy." 16: This happened three times, and immediately the object was taken up into the sky.

9: "...as they were on their way" – the three men from Caesarea. Sixth hour – at noon. The flat roofs of the houses in those days made a perfect place for prayer. The roof was accessible by an outside stone staircase.

10: While praying, food was being prepared and likely the aroma caused Peter to realize how hungry he was. While caught in a mental transition Peter "fell into a trance". This means Peter's mind was displaced outside of its normal environment. He was lying on his face. Did he fall asleep again while praying?

11: "And he saw" (literally – "seeing") a vivid historical present indicating that his mind was captivated by a new phenomenon. What he saw was a vast sheet of sailcloth being lowered down by ropes or cords tied to the four corners.

12: It was filled with four footed animals, notably those that are unclean such as the camel, the rabbit, the pig, the boar, the horse, the lion, etc, along with birds such as the eagle, the vulture, the buzzard, the kite, the falcon, the raven, the ostrich, the owl, the sea gull, the hawk, the cormorant, the pelican, carrion vulture, the stork, the heron, the bat, as well as all the winged insects that walk on *all* fours, except the locust and grasshopper, and also whatever walks on its paws, among all the creatures that walk on *all* fours, as well as the mole, the mouse, the lizard, the gecko, the crocodile, the sand reptile, the chameleon, any snake, etc. as described in Leviticus 11. The great and vast cloth sail was filled as far as the eye could see with unclean creatures.

13: The command reveals that Peter was in a reclined or laying position.

14: The vision was a mystery to Peter. It demanded a totally contrary way of thinking from that which Peter had been taught regarding unclean things.

15: The voice stated that what Peter saw had been declared clean. What could this mean? Surely Peter was not being told to go out, kill and eat an unclean creature, was he?

16: It made no sense, yet the vision was repeated three times. It took at least three repetitions to get something into Peter's head. This is the third time God had to deal with Peter and repeat something three times. Nevertheless, this was a tough one to figure out. But he did (verse 28). Perhaps being with Simon the tanner for an extended stay softened Peter to the intent of God's purpose and Word. Yet, in Antioch many years later, one must pause to wonder about Peter's understanding (Galatians 2:11-21).

10:17-23

17: "Now while Peter was greatly perplexed in mind as to what the vision which he had seen might be, behold, the men who had been sent by Cornelius, having asked directions for Simon's house, appeared at the gate; 18: and calling out, they were asking whether Simon, who was also called Peter, was staying there. 19: While Peter was reflecting on the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are looking for you. 20: "But get up, go downstairs and accompany them without misgivings, for I have sent them Myself." 21: Peter went down to the men and said, "Behold, I am the one you are looking for; what is the reason for which you have come?" 22: They said, "Cornelius, a centurion, a righteous and God-fearing man well spoken of by the entire nation of the Jews, was *divinely* directed by a holy angel to send for you *to come* to his house and hear a message from you." 23: So he invited them in and gave them lodging. And on the next day he got up and went away with them, and some of the brethren from Joppa accompanied him."

17-18: At exactly the same moment Peter was contemplating the vision on the rooftop, the three men from Caesarea arrived and called out at the gate asking if Peter was residing there. Apparently Simon the Tanner was not in the house, and Peter was de-facto in charge.

19-20: "The Spirit said to him"... There is no definition as to what took place when the Spirit spoke. Was it audible? Was it in his mind? A comment: The command was not to tell others what the Spirit had said, but to get up and go meet the men. Too many Christians testify that, "God told them something" and the testimony is questionable most of the time, especially when it involves imposing command or message to someone else. The interesting thing is the identity of the Spirit with God. The Spirit is seen to be speaking concluding the command with, "I have sent them Myself."

21-22: Peter had no idea why they had come. However, it finally began to dawn on him what the vision might mean as he spoke with the men and heard their story. The men speak of the angel's directive in the strongest term.

23: Inviting these three Gentiles into the house for lodging evidences Peter's transition from strict Jew to cognizant evangelist. It was late enough to await until the next day before departing for Caesarea. As the four of them left the next morning, some of the brethren from Joppa accompanied them. According to 11:6, they were six in number and were no doubt encouraged by Peter to come along as witnesses of what was to transpire.

10:24-33

24: "On the following day he entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them and had called together his relatives and close friends. 25: When Peter entered, Cornelius met

him, and fell at his feet and worshiped *him*. 26: But Peter raised him up, saying, "Stand up; I too am *just* a man." 27: As he talked with him, he entered and found many people assembled. 28: And he said to them, "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and *yet* God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean. 29: "That is why I came without even raising any objection when I was sent for. So I ask for what reason you have sent for me." 30: Cornelius said, "Four days ago to this hour, I was praying in my house during the ninth hour; and behold, a man stood before me in shining garments, 31: and he said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. 32: 'Therefore send to Joppa and invite Simon, who is also called Peter, to come to you; he is staying at the house of Simon *the* tanner by the sea.' 33: "So I sent for you immediately, and you have been kind enough to come. Now then, we are all here present before God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord."

24: Relatives and close friends of Cornelius would mostly be Gentiles in this context.

24-26: Better – “As Peter began entering”. Peter’s entrance caused Cornelius to bow down as he would to someone his superior in rank or to the emperor. But Peter sets this homage aside and raises him up and begins to converse with him while walking into Cornelius’ residence. Those supposedly following in Peter’s footsteps are not following Peter’s action. The conversation was undoubtedly Peter’s wondering and inquiry as to why he had been summoned.

27-29: As Peter entered the inner room, he was somewhat taken aback by the gathering of Gentiles. The meaning of the vision of the sheet of sailcloth was reinforced. God was negating the division between Jew and Gentile in reference as to who would be the citizens of the Kingdom of God.

Peter did not understand the full intent of God’s plan regarding the Law, Salvation by Grace, the eradication of all traditions, lineage, laws, rituals of worship, sacrifices, food laws, feast days, and so forth which was accomplished to bring the Gentiles on an equal footing with the Jews in every way in Christ. In other words, he did not fully grasp the impact and meaning of the New Covenant. There was no specific Scriptural passage forbidding a Jew from being with Gentiles, but the prohibition was added into the traditions and binding customs of the Jews by the early Rabbis.

Peter made no objection to the servants’ request but makes no mention his objection to what God asked him to do when the vision occurred.

30-33: Cornelius had not yet explained to Peter what had transpired. He does so now in detail and invites Peter to tell the assembly what is the command of the Lord.

10:34-44

34: “Opening his mouth, Peter said: "I most certainly understand *now* that God is not one to show partiality, 35: but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him. 36: "The word which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)—37: you yourselves know the thing which took place throughout all Judea, starting from Galilee, after the baptism which John proclaimed. 38: "*You know of* Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and *how* He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. 39: "We are witnesses of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in

Jerusalem. They also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross. 40: "God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He become visible, 41: not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, *that is*, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. 42: "And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead. 43: "Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins." 44: While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message."

34-35: Peter notes what God's view and plan is for all mankind.

36: In an awkward sentence, Peter graciously abbreviates the history of God's redemptive plan beginning with Abraham. His intent is to say, "God, through Israel, sent His word to the nations proclaiming peace between God and all men, and since Jesus the Messiah is Lord of all men both Jew and Gentile, God's provision of salvation by faith in Christ is made available to you today as well as to the Jews.

37-39: Peter recognizes their knowledge of what had transpired concerning Jesus after his baptism by John. He is satisfied to summarize the ministry of Christ through the crucifixion, burial and resurrection.

40-42: "visible" is a difficult translation. What Peter is trying to say is that God raised Jesus up and He was seen. The translators can choose from "visible", "manifested", "appeared", "openly seen". The word leaves some mystery to the Christ's post-resurrection appearance(s). "Ate and drank with Him" – to underscore it was a bodily resurrection.

43: When Peter completes this sentence, the hearers, all of them, were in the process of coming to faith and believed.

44: It appears that Peter was interrupted when the Holy Spirit came upon the assembly.

10:45-48

45: All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. 46: For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter answered, 47: "Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we *did*, can he?" 48: And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days.

45-46: The word "amazed" again, used as before as "beside oneself with astonishment" as the Jews heard the Gentiles speaking in tongues (languages) exalting God. There is no note regarding an interpretation of these languages so the Jews recognized the language. It well may have been Hebrew or Aramaic.

47: A rhetorical question. Baptism is an affirmation that these new Gentile believers are full members of the body of Christ and the kingdom of God just as the Jews are.

48: Peter ordered them baptized and then was asked to stay on a few days with Cornelius and the new believers, which he did.

Chapter Eleven

11:1-18

1: "Now the apostles and the brethren who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. 2: And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those who were circumcised took issue with him, 3: saying, "You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them." 4: But Peter began *speaking* and *proceeded* to explain to them in orderly sequence, saying, 5: "I was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, an object coming down like a great sheet lowered by four corners from the sky; and it came right down to me, 6: and when I had fixed my gaze on it and was observing it I saw the four-footed animals of the earth and the wild beasts and the crawling creatures and the birds of the air. 7: "I also heard a voice saying to me, 'Get up, Peter; kill and eat.' 8: "But I said, 'By no means, Lord, for nothing unholy or unclean has ever entered my mouth.' 9: "But a voice from heaven answered a second time, 'What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy.' 10: "This happened three times, and everything was drawn back up into the sky. 11: "And behold, at that moment three men appeared at the house in which we were *staying*, having been sent to me from Caesarea. 12: "The Spirit told me to go with them without misgivings. These six brethren also went with me and we entered the man's house. 13: "And he reported to us how he had seen the angel standing in his house, and saying, 'Send to Joppa and have Simon, who is also called Peter, brought here; 14: and he will speak words to you by which you will be saved, you and all your household.' 15: "And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as *He did* upon us at the beginning. 16: "And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' 17: "Therefore if God gave to them the same gift as *He gave* to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?" 18: When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, "Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance *that leads* to life."

1: "Apostles and the brethren"... Here is one of many examples where the word "brethren" is used of fellow believers. At times the word "brethren" is also used to simply designate Jews of "the flesh" who are of common lineage or culture. (Note: Acts 2:29; 2:37; 3:17; Romans 9:3; Hebrews 2:12; 2:17; etc.)

2: "...those who were circumcised..." - Jewish believers. It was not yet acceptable that the Gentiles could be equal partners in the kingdom of God.

3: Uncircumcised Gentiles would not be observing the "clean" and "unclean" regulations regarding food, preparation or ceremonial washing of hands.

4-15: See notes on chapter 10. Verses 12-14 again indicate that Peter had no idea why he was going to Caesarea or what he was going to say.

16: Acts 1:5

17-18: Peter reiterates his conclusion in 10:44-48 in the form of a rhetorical question to his hearers and they reached the proper conclusion and glorified God..

11:19-21

19: So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone. 20: But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and *began* speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus. 21: And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord.

19: Verse 19 describes both native Jews (“Hebrews”, note: 6:1) and Hellenistic Jews who had made their way up the West Coast of Israel through Phoenicia and into Syria.

20: These were likely Hellenistic Jews who had been converted. Some were originally from Cyprus, an island off the coast of Syria, and others from Cyrene, the capital of Libya in Africa. When they arrived in Antioch (of Syria) they proclaimed the gospel to the Gentiles there.

One of the seven chosen to serve the widows in Jerusalem (chapter 7) was Nicolas (7:5) a proselyte from Antioch. As a Hellenistic Jew, Nicolas, as well as many other Jews born outside of Israel and having lost positive connection with his lineage, had to reenter Judaism through a specific process in order to be reinstated into Judaism. It is likely that during the scattering during the persecution under Saul (especially against these seven), that Nicolas returned to Antioch and began a work there. It is also possible that Barnabas, who was from Cyprus, was one of those who went with Nicolas to Antioch and spoke to the Gentiles there.

21: It was evident (or there was evidence) establishing that God was in the ministry. Antioch (named after Antiochus I) had a long history and was strategically located in Syria on the trade route from North to South. It was at the center of the Hellenistic world created by Alexander. It became the third city of the Roman Empire (after Rome and Alexandria) and enjoyed prominence and prosperity for centuries. The city came to host the first major Gentile congregation, and was the stepping off port for major missionary activity.

11:22-26

22: The news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch. 23: Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and *began* to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain *true* to the Lord; 24: for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord. 25: And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul; 26: and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

22: Joseph “Barnabas”. He likely was dubbed “Barnabas” due to his uplifting messages. His name means “Son of Encouragement”. He first appears in 4:36-37 when he is seen selling a tract of land and giving the proceeds to the communal fund. Throughout his life he is seen as one who apparently has some wealth, but overwhelming generous and compassionate. He is described as a native of Cyprus and a Levite. His priestly family had somehow separated from Jerusalem, and his

birthplace makes him a Jew of the “dispersion” (or “diaspora”), and thus a Hellenistic Jew. He was the cousin of John Mark (Col. 4:10) and quite possibly a convert at that Day of Pentecost spoken of in chapter two. This amazing event along with John Mark’s eyewitness accounts no doubt turned Barnabas into a fervent Christian witness.

When Saul of Tarsus had come to Jerusalem to meet with the disciples for the first time (Acts 9:26-27), they were afraid of him believing that he was using the ruse of being a believer to find them and arrest them. But somehow, Barnabas had come to know Saul’s conversion experience and, knowing Saul was a true believer, personally set up meeting between the Jerusalem believers and Saul. The church obviously trusted Barnabas and the meeting took place. It may be that Barnabas traveled from Antioch to Damascus when news of Saul’s conversion reached his ears. There among the believers (9:19-22), Barnabas may have heard Saul personally, or at the very least heard of Saul from those who traveled from Damascus to Antioch (about 175 miles).

In any case, due to the surprisingly large number of Gentiles coming to the Lord, The Jerusalem Church sent Barnabas to Antioch to shepherd the growing congregation there, of both Jews and Gentiles. Barnabas selection indicates his familiarity with the situation there, not disregarding his being of Cypriot birth, and a Greek speaking Jew of some influence. No doubt he had visited Antioch many times as Antioch was only about 90 miles by ship and 15 miles inland from Cyprus. There is much more to Barnabas’ story as will be seen in Luke’s narrative. He becomes one of the key people in the early church.

23: Barnabas was pleased at what had transpired in Antioch. He saw God’s grace at work in this pagan city. Barnabas rejoiced with them and began “encouraging” them all. The word used is the common but important “παρακαλεω” (para-ka-leh-oh), the same word Jesus used to describe the person and ministry of the “Holy Spirit”. The word carries with it many nuances, including: “to call to or for”, to “exhort”, to “encourage”, “appeal”, “beg”, “beseech”, “comfort”, “conciliate”, “entreat”, “exhort”, “implore”, “invite”, “plead”, “requested”, and “urge”.

We are told he approached “all” of them in this manner. This suggests he was ministering to both Jewish and Gentile believers who were having difficulty getting along. The Jews especially, were uncomfortable being with the Gentiles, and would stick to themselves and eat together rather than mingle with “the unclean”. Barnabas and probably Nicolas were working to solve this problem, as was Paul later (verses 25-26). But it was not easy. Paul reveals the seriousness of the conflict in Galatians 2:7-21:

7: “But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter *had been* to the circumcised 8: (for He who effectually worked for Peter in *his* apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles), 9: and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we *might go* to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. 10: *They only asked* us to remember the poor--the very thing I also was eager to do. 11: But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. 12: For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he *began* to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. 13: The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. 14: But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, "If

you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how *is it that* you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews? 15: "We *are* Jews by nature and not sinners from among the Gentiles; 16" nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified. 17: "But if, while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have also been found sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin? May it never be! 18: "For if I rebuild what I have *once* destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor. 19: "For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God. 20: "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. 21: "I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness *comes* through the Law, then Christ died needlessly."

24: "Full of the Holy Spirit and of faith" – a phrase used for The "seven", especially Stephen. It is also used of Peter and other key leaders of the early church. It is not only the message, but the character of the messenger that is important to reaching others for Christ.

25-26: Going to Tarsus (about 95 miles by ship, 110 by land) to find Saul and bring him to Antioch demonstrates the respect and authority Saul commanded. Barnabas found himself over his head with the Jews who were entrenched in tradition, custom and law. Saul was the perfect choice to give him a hand. Barnabas, Saul and possibly Nicolas met with the "church" for a full year and taught considerable numbers. It was at Antioch the believers were first called "the church" as well as "Christians". The word Christian means "belonging to Christ". We don't know whether the term was adopted by the believers or given to the church as a term of derision, as was the term "Baptists" during the reformation. It is possible that Gentiles gave them the term because the Jews would not likely use the term for "Messiah" and give it to others. The term is only used three times in the New Testament. In Acts 26:28 Agrippa uses the term, possibly in derision, when answering Paul and in I Peter 4:16, it also seems to be a term of shame in the early days. For what Paul faced at Tarsus because of his faith in Christ, see comment on 14:21-22.

11:27-28

27: "Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. 28: One of them named Agabus ("to love") stood up and *began* to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the *reign* of Claudius.

27-28: These "prophets" were legitimate believers exercising the "gift of prophecy" in the church.¹² Agabus, from Judea, maintains his work and ministry for years. Agabus' prediction dates (approximately) the time of the work at Antioch as occurring around 44-45 A.D., and the famine occurred during the rule of Claudius c. 46-47. Agabus reappears in Acts 21:10-11. The prediction of the famine motivated the church to take up a collection to help the poor. Paul continued this work of benevolence for many years as he traveled on his missionary journeys.

11:29-30

¹² See this author's work entitled "A brief Word Study Concerning The 'Gifts' of The Holy Spirit".

29: And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a *contribution* for the relief of the brethren living in Judea. 30: And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders.

20:30: Barnabas and Saul travel to Judea taking the collection to the “elders”. This is the first mention of these leaders in Acts. It became typical to place older, well established believers in positions of leadership in the church. This was a Jewish custom as well, and these older men were also assigned to adjudicate any matters arising among the brothers and sisters.

Chapter Twelve

12:1-11

1: “Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church in order to mistreat them. 2: And he had James the brother of John put to death with a sword. 3: When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. Now it was during the days of Unleavened Bread. 4: When he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out before the people. 5: So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God. 6: On the very night when Herod was about to bring him forward, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and guards in front of the door were watching over the prison. 7: And behold, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter's side and woke him up, saying, "Get up quickly." And his chains fell off his hands. 8: And the angel said to him, "Gird yourself and put on your sandals." And he did so. And he said to him, "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me." 9: And he went out and continued to follow, and he did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. 10: When they had passed the first and second guard, they came to the iron gate that leads into the city, which opened for them by itself; and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel departed from him. 11: When Peter came to himself, he said, "Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent forth His angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting."

1: “about that time” ...Roughly during this same period of time, now some ten years after the Day of Pentecost. “Herod the King” is Herod Agrippa I, who died in 44 A.D.. The events portrayed in chapter 12 both predate and parallel the events of chapter eleven and could possibly be placed between 11:18 and 11:19. Peter had returned to Jerusalem (11:1) and Herod had to have acted prior to his own death, and prior to the time the work began in Antioch (11:22). Herod Agrippa I, was the grandson of Herod the Great, and was King of Palestine A.D. 42 to 44. Only for these three years was a Herod king over Palestine after the death of Herod the Great. There was never a “king” over Palestine afterwards. Herod was brought up in Rome and had close ties with the imperial family. He was a close friend of the young Caligula and upon his accession gave Herod the title of “king” and bestowed upon him the tetrarchy of Philip (Luke 3:1) and shortly afterward that of Herod Antipas, who had been banished to Lyons in France in 39. Herod had supported Claudius succession to Caligula and so Claudius added Judea and Samaria to Herod’s empire. When Herod returned to Judea, he made a great effort to please then Jews even to the point of a zealous practice

of outward Jewish practices as well as a persecution of the renegade Jewish followers of Christ. Agrippa II, before whom Paul made his defense, (Acts 25-26) was his son.

2-3: This “James” is the son of Zebedee, the brother of John. James (In Hebrew “Jacob”), one of the three closest followers of Jesus was a leading apostle in Jerusalem, and with the departure of the seven under the persecution associated with Stephen, Peter, James and John were the next leaders to become targets. Perhaps when Peter was out of the district, Herod decided to please the Jews by capturing and murdering, by beheading, James, the next in charge. Seeing it pleased the Jews, he went after Peter. Of James, there is no other word given to us in the New Testament.

3-4: “during the days of unleavened bread” – The Passover week when Peter was most likely to be in Jerusalem for the feast. He was probably placed in the tower of Antonia on the Northwest corner of the Temple. 4: Peter was guarded 24 hours a day. The four squads (a “quaternion” for each of the four Roman watches) that is, four parties of four each were assigned to guard Peter, corresponding to the four Roman watches; two within the prison cell chained to Peter, and two at the gates, each party being on duty for the space of one watch. After “Passover” for execution to avoid offending the Jewish scruples during this most holy of Jewish feasts.

5: “fervent prayer” (εκτενωσ, “ek-ten-os”), the same intense, emotional prayer used of Jesus’ prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane.

6–9: See note at verses 3-4. Peter had been in prison for a few days, possibly during the entire feast. 7: The angel’s appearance was unexpected and startling. “A light shone”...The glory of the Lord – see Luke 2:9. The term “glory” designates supreme power and splendor, and is equated with magnitude, heaviness or weight. There is no force or power as great or even comparable to God’s. 8: The angel’s actions and words went unnoticed by the guards. The hour was likely between 3:00 A.M. and 6:00 A.M.. Peter had set his garments and sandals aside for the night indicating that the interior of the prison was warm. 9: Peter thought he was experiencing another vision as he did in Joppa when the sheet was lowered from the sky. The word “vision” here is the same word used then. The detail of this account reveals Luke’s personal discussion with Peter.

10: Note the difficulty anyone would have in trying to escape on their own. The iron gate would be locked and impassable without assistance. It was the main gate from which one entered the prison complex from the street. It may have had steps leading up from the street level. The power of God over the material and physical universe is impressive once again, and reminds us of the ease with which Jesus’ controlled the elements of creation.

11: “came to himself” as if he had been in “an out of body” experience, “away from himself”. When he realized where he was and what had happened, he was conscious that he had escaped what he and everyone else had been expecting - his martyrdom.

12:12-17

12: “And when he realized *this*, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying. 13: When he knocked at the door of the gate, a servant-girl named Rhoda came to answer. 14: When she recognized

Peter's voice, because of her joy she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter was standing in front of the gate. 15: They said to her, "You are out of your mind!" But she kept insisting that it was so. They kept saying, "It is his angel." 16: But Peter continued knocking; and when they had opened *the door*, they saw him and were amazed. 17: But motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had led him out of the prison. And he said, "Report these things to James and the brethren." Then he left and went to another place.

12: Mary, John Mark's mother and Barnabas' aunt (Colossians 4:10). This house was the central meeting place of the church in Jerusalem, especially of the leadership and had been for some ten years. This night, however, James (the Lord's brother), John and the other apostles were not there.

13-16: Though praying fervently, they fully expected Peter to be executed. Their expectations were not unfounded as one can appreciate the soundness of a Roman imprisonment based on those expectations. When Rhoda announced Peter was at the gate, they promptly told her she was out of her mind, - insane or mad. But as she kept insisting, they tried to placate her with the idea that what she had heard was Peter's "angel" – meaning either his "ghost" or his personal guardian angel which many Jews believed in. In any case, it could not be Peter himself. This shows that prayer, even without expectation or "faith" is effective, or that God works His will regardless of either prayer or faith. 16: Finally, someone decided to check the gate and when it was opened it there stood Peter. The people were aghast.

17: Peter immediately had to quiet them. After explaining what had happened, he told the people to report it to James (see note on verse 12) and the rest of the brethren. Then Peter left and went somewhere else and could not be found. Luke does not reveal the exact location, likely a house, for it was and may still have been a secret retreat of the apostles. His silence protects both the apostles and the homeowner.

12:18-23

18: Now when day came, there was no small disturbance among the soldiers *as to* what could have become of Peter. 19: When Herod had searched for him and had not found him, he examined the guards and ordered that they be led away *to execution*. Then he went down from Judea to Caesarea and was spending time there. 20: Now he was very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon; and with one accord they came to him, and having won over Blastus the king's chamberlain, they were asking for peace, because their country was fed by the king's country. 21: On an appointed day Herod, having put on his royal apparel, took his seat on the rostrum and *began* delivering an address to them. 22: The people kept crying out, "The voice of a god and not of a man!" 23: And immediately an angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and died.

18: Herod may have executed the guards for dereliction of duty. He obviously did not believe their story, and in fact probably believed they had facilitated Peter's escape due to some heavy bribe given to them. Since no guard was injured nor the prison damaged, what else could he think? The words "to execution" are supplied and not stated in the original Greek. But execution by sword for this offense was a common Roman practice.

19: Headquarters for the Roman Procurator were at Caesarea, and there is some evidence (Josephus) that he went there to attend the games held in honor of Claudius, but the conflict in Phoenicia may have been another reason.

20: There is no record of the issues causing Herod's anger, but most commentators feel it relates to trade and revenue. Herod however, though having no jurisdiction in Phoenicia, had control over food supplied to Phoenicia from the farmers of Galilee. To avoid any conflict with Rome or cessation of supplies, representatives from Tyre and Sidon, having agreed to a plan, came to Herod seeking terms of peace.

First they sought out Blastus, Herod's "chamberlain". This term could have one or more meanings. First, it indicates the management of the king's personal quarters, including his wardrobe, transportation, itinerary and so on. Second it indicates management over financial matters in the role of treasurer or bookkeeper. They may have won Blastus over through bribery, but likely Blastus handled the entire matter, satisfied with the resolution offered by the representatives.

21: Herod, the situation being resolved, decided to address the people of Caesarea on the day honoring Claudius, a day of games and feasting. He took his place on the stage of the theatre, and, according to Josephus was dressed in royal robes entirely of silver.

22: As he spoke, the crowds flattered Herod by shouting, "The voice of a god and not of a man" to which Herod accepted and bowed in an attitude of graciousness and mock humility. No doubt he was quite pleased with himself.

23: There are some varying explanations for Herod's sudden death, but all agree that he died during this event. Josephus, for example, noting the king's superstitious nature, tells us Herod had been taught that an owl seen in daylight was a dark harbinger. In the midst of his speech he supposedly saw an owl sitting on an awning in the theatre and was seized with terrible stomach pains. Carried to his palace, he died on the fifth day from some loathsome disease. Herod was struck down at the pinnacle of his glory and power. Another account says he was dead by the next day. The worms are intestinal worms which ate him up. There are other accounts of worms killing and eating people as well as being expelled from the body after death. Herod died in c.44 A.D.

12:24-25

24: But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied. 25: And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their mission, taking along with *them* John, who was also called Mark.

24-25: The beginning of a new theme and history. Barnabas and Saul, having delivered the collection of funds for those poor in Jerusalem in light of the famine (See: 11:29-30), returned to Antioch bringing with them John Mark, Barnabas' cousin. At this time it seems, he took the name "Mark" to be distinguished from the other "Johns". This visit may parallel Paul's account in Galatians 1:11-21.

Chapter Thirteen

13:1

13:1: “Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was *there*, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.”

1: This was likely after the famine, about 47- 48 A.D. We now turn to Saul (Paul) as the central figure of Luke’s narrative. The church at Antioch is the focus and some of its central leaders are mentioned. Barnabas we know. “Simeon” called “Niger” may be the same man who carried the cross of Jesus as he is from Cyrene. His name “Niger” is Latin for “black” and he may have been of native African descent. Lucius also is from Cyrene, the capital of Libya in North Africa. This may be the same man mentioned by Paul in his letter to the church at Rome (16:21) and if so, had been with Paul some ten years by the time of that writing. Manaen in Hebrew is Menahem, as in the king of Israel after Shallum during the eighth century B.C.. He had been brought up as the foster brother to Herod Antipas (the slayer of John the Baptist). He might have had helpful insight into the thoughts of the Herodians. He is not mentioned again in scripture. Saul is mentioned last, but not least. Luke appears to avoid naming people in order of importance here, (in the Hebrew fashion) placing Saul at the end and continuing with him from this point onward.

13:2-3

2: “While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” 3: Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

2-3: The word of this probably came through one or more of the “prophets” mentioned in verse 1. For the laying on of hands, see notes on 4:7. The order of persons is “Barnabas and Saul”, noting that the lead apostle is Barnabas at this point. This may also be due to Barnabas being older than Saul.

13:4-12

4: So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia and from there they sailed to Cyprus. 5: When they reached Salamis, they *began* to proclaim the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews; and they also had John as their helper. 6: When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they found a magician, a Jewish false prophet whose name was Bar-Jesus, 7: who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence. This man summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. 8: But Elymas the magician (for so his name is translated) was opposing them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. 9: But Saul, who was also *known as* Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze on him, 10: and said, “You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord? 11: “Now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and not see the sun for a time.” And immediately a mist and a darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking those who would lead him by the hand. 12: Then the proconsul believed when he saw what had happened, being amazed at the teaching of the Lord.”

4-5: “Sent out by The Holy Spirit” refers back to verse two. It was 15 miles from Antioch to the coastal harbor at Seleucia in Syria where a ship (a freighter), would sail to their destination. It was common for all ships to hug the coastline as much as possible to escape from or find shelter from the sudden violent winds and storms that occur on the Mediterranean (note: 27:4).

Salamis was a town (the old Grecian capital) on the east coast of Cyprus with a seaport near modern Famagusta. They immediately went into the synagogues to proclaim their message. “At this busy mercantile port immense numbers of Jews were settled, which accounts for what is here said, that they had more than one synagogue, in which Barnabas and Saul preached, while other cities had one only.”¹³

It was the custom in the synagogues to have visitors from other provinces stand and give a greeting. Those attending from the city were always eager to hear news or a message from abroad (Note 13:15). Thus, Barnabas and Saul always had a ready audience. The news about Jesus was always welcome until it clashed with those Jews who felt threatened by the proclamation. “John” is John “Mark” (See: 12:24-25). Barnabas made the decision to have John accompany them. John may have been welcome because of his closeness to Jesus’ disciples and because he personally witnessed many events. His testimony would give more validity to the message of Barnabas and Saul since they were not eyewitnesses of Jesus’ ministry.

6-7: “Had gone through the whole island”.... Cyprus was Barnabas’ home, but we don’t know the city in which he resided. However, he was a valuable guide to the party and may have known many citizens in the island, especially among the Jewish population there. They duplicated their synagogue visits throughout the island along the southern coast until, some one hundred miles later traveling on a fine Roman road, they reached the west side of Cyprus at Paphos. Paphos was the Roman capital of the island where the governor (or proconsul) resided. It was located some eight miles north of “Old Paphos” where the goddess Venus was worshipped.

Here, they encountered a “magician” named Bar-Jesus who was a counselor to Sergius Paulus, the Roman appointed Proconsul. “Bar-Jesus” means “Son of Joshua”. He was called “Elymas” as a title, which is Arabic for “magician”. He was a “magos”, much like Simon in chapter eight, and a Jew who had abandoned his heritage for the popular, but condemned vocation (Deuteronomy 18:10-12).

The word used for “magician” is “Magos” and is only found elsewhere in the New Testament in Matthew 2:1, ff. and Acts 8:9-11. It is referred to frequently in the Old Testament going back to Genesis 44. It specifically refers to the “arts” of the Medians and Persians founded by Zarathrushttra (Zoroaster) in the sixth century B.C.. The ancient Persian priesthood of Zoroaster had spread throughout the Mediterranean and found a welcome audience in those who had practiced demonic arts for centuries. It was especially popular in Egypt, joining forces with Greek philosophies and ancient Egyptian mysticism. (Remember in Exodus the authority and power of Pharaoh’s “magicians”. Note: Exodus 8:7, “The ‘magicians’ did the same with their secret arts, making frogs come up on the land of Egypt.”)

From Fausset’s Bible Dictionary: “Called ‘wise men’, Hebrew *chartumyim*, ‘sacred scribes,’ from two roots “sacred” and “style” or “pen” (*cheret*); priests skilled in sacred writings, and in divining

¹³ Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary

through signs the will of heaven. A regular order among the Egyptians, devoted to magic and astrology. The word is Persian or Median; it appears in Rab-mag, "chief of the magicians" (Jer 39:3), brought with Nebuchadnezzar's expedition, that its issue might be foreknown.

The Magi were a sacerdotal caste among the Medes, in connection with the Zoroastrian religion. "They waited upon the sacred fire, and performed ablutions, and practiced observation of the stars." Muller (Herzog Cyclopedia) says that the Median priests were not originally called Magi, but by the names found in the Zendavesta "Atharva," guardians of the fire, and that the Chaldeans first gave them the name Magi. Nebuchadnezzar gathered round him the religious teachers and wise men of the nations he conquered (Dan 1:3-4; Dan 1:20)."¹⁴

From Smith's Bible Dictionary: "Ma'gi. (Authorized Version, *wise men*). 1. In the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, the word occurs but twice, and then only incidentally. Jer 39:3; Jer 39:13." "Originally, they were a class of priests, among the Persians and Medes, who formed the king's privy council, and cultivated astrology, medicine and occult natural science. They are frequently referred to by ancient authors. Afterward, the term was applied to all eastern philosophers." -- Schaff's Popular Commentary.

"They appear in Herodotus' history of Astyages as interpreters of dreams, (i. 120); but as they appear in Jeremiah among the retinue of the Chaldean king, we must suppose Nebuchadnezzar's conquests led him to gather round him, the wise men and religious teachers of the nations which he subdued, and that thus, the sacred tribe of the Medes rose under his rule to favor and power.

The Magi took their places among "the astrologers and star gazers and monthly prognosticators." It is with such men that, we have to think of Daniel and his fellow exiles as associated. The office which Daniel accepted, Dan 5:11, was probably rab-mag -- chief of the Magi.

The word presented itself to the Greeks as connected with a foreign system of divination and it soon became a byword for the worst form of imposture. This is the predominant meaning of the word as it appears in the New Testament. Act 8:9; Act 13:8."¹⁵

Elymas is noted as a "false prophet" by Luke, attributing to him all the worst the term "magos" could suggest. Luke also notes that Sergius Paulus was a "man of intelligence". The original language Luke employs means Sergius Paulus "had it together" as we would say. How much influence Elymas had upon him is unknown, but he desired to hear Barnabas and Saul regarding their message. However, a Gentile Roman Senate Official, in summoning Barnabas and Saul, opens the door for the Gentile ministry Saul is ultimately commissioned by Christ to fulfill.

8: Elymas made an effort to "turn the Proconsul away from the faith". This was no small effort. No doubt Elymas feared for the loss of position should the proconsul adopt the Christian faith. It is evident at this point that Sergius Paulus was already persuaded.

9-11: This is the first statement by Saul recorded in his ministry. This verse also shows the transition of leadership from Barnabas to Saul, "also known as Paul". The name "Paul" was his Gentile name when he was in Gentile company. As a Hellenistic Jew, he possessed both names from his youth. The name "Paul" was softer and more appealing to Roman or Gentile ears.

¹⁴ Fausset's Bible Dictionary, "Magi"

¹⁵ Smith's Bible Dictionary, "Magi"

Paul was “filled with the Holy Spirit” and spoke boldly to Elymas in front of the Proconsul. He refers to the “straight ways of the Lord” mentioned in Isaiah 40:3 and numerous other passages condemning Elymas because his goal is to divert people from God’s ways to his own. After Elymas was vanquished in blindness and shame, Paul’s ministry of light to the Gentiles begins.

12: The darkness vanquished, the light is clear to Sergius Paulus and he believes. Both the miracle and the message are convincing to him. The leadership transition is now complete in the missionary team. Barnabas becomes subordinate to Paul.

13:13-14

13: Now Paul and his companions put out to sea from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia; but John left them and returned to Jerusalem. 14: But going on from Perga, they arrived at Pisidian Antioch, and on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down.

13-14: It has now been several weeks since they left Antioch. As they considered where to travel next, they decided to take the sea journey to Pamphylia. This was some 150 miles of travel by ship, roughly two to three days travel. When they arrived at Attalia, the fine seaport of Pamphylia, they made their way some five miles inland and twelve miles east of Attalia to the capital city of Perga. There, John made the decision to leave them and return to Jerusalem. There was, no doubt, a heavy discussion when John announced his decision. It is not clear why John left but it is known that Paul was highly annoyed at him (15:37-39). It may have been that John did not envision or anticipate a trip beyond Cyprus and could not commit to a longer journey for some reason. Perhaps the transition of leadership from Barnabas (his cousin) to Paul disagreed with him, or he with it. After discussing the upcoming itinerary, John may have given second thought to his participation. If John knew of this plan, it may have caused him pause. First off, this was going to be a long-long journey overall. He may not have anticipated this at all and felt he couldn’t leave his mother for that long of a time. Another possibility was that John couldn’t accept the unrestricted, unconditional participation of Gentiles in the gospel. John ultimately returned to Jerusalem. Some time afterwards he began his work we call “The Gospel of Mark”.

Considering what lay ahead, Paul may have interpreted John’s decision as failure, faithlessness, weakness or cowardice. There is no question that Paul had a toughness and stubbornness about him that offered little patience with what he perceived to be a lack of commitment in another person. If he pressed on in spite of hardships, those who didn’t would fall under his critical gaze. To Paul, John had “abandoned” or “deserted” the work to which God had called them (Acts 15:38). The word used is “αφιστημι” meaning to “stand off or away from”. Whatever the reason John gave for departing, it was, in Paul’s mind, insufficient. Barnabas, however made the commitment to continue with Paul. From Perga they headed inland, Antioch of Pisidia their destination.

They are now entering the province of Galatia. This is a hostile and dangerous area for strangers. The word Galatia comes from the term given to the Gauls/Celts. These ancient peoples from Europe were warriors who, in c. 280 B.C., poured into Greece and ravaged Delphi. At the invitation of Nicomedes I, King of Bithynia, they hired on as mercenaries to aid him in a civil war. From there they migrated east and settled in what we know as Galatia, named after them. They accommodated themselves to the Greek written script for practical reasons but spoke a broken Gallic/Greek.

They did not tarry at Perga but left for Antioch right away. Perhaps the weather had something to

do with this, as many speculate, or perhaps Paul felt the need to advance so Barnabas had no chance to change his mind. Some speculate Paul had picked up a disease, such as Malaria, and became increasing ill along the way and needed to reach a major city to rest. This is unlikely at this time even though Paul speaks of a serious illness or disability he incurred on this journey in Galatians 4:12-16, "I beg of you, brethren, become as I *am*, for I also *have become* as you *are*. You have done me no wrong; but you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time; and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus *Himself*. Where then is that sense of blessing you had? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me. So have I become your enemy by telling you the truth?"

It is clear that whatever Paul contracted, its effects extended to the rest of his life. It may have well been a serious attack on his eyes or eyesight as suggested in Galatians 4:15. We know that for the rest of his life, he used an amanuensis to write for him and seldom wrote a letter himself. The exceptions are greetings found in Galatians 6:11; II Thessalonians 3:17; I Corinthians 16:21; Colossians 4:18; and in the letter to Philemon, Paul notes that it is written in his own hand suggesting that he usually employs an amanuensis. Normally, he dictated his thoughts (Romans 16:22; etc.).

Later on, during his second missionary journey, he persuades Luke (probably of Troas), a Gentile physician, to be his constant companion for the rest of his life. This may well indicate his need of physical help as he traveled due to physical disabilities or limitations he was experiencing. This all leads to the idea of severe consequences from the stoning at Lystra yet to be endured.

Finally, looking at Galatians 4:13-14 again, his account is quite revealing, 13: "...but you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time; 14: and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus *Himself*." Verses 13-14 suggest that Paul was forced to stop and recuperate and in so doing he found cause to preach the word to those with whom he stayed. His physical appearance and condition must have been awful, but having been thought dead by stoning, his reappearance in the city could well have been looked upon as a miracle of God and thus the comment about him being received as an "angel of God".

He also speaks of his "thorn in the flesh", in II Corinthians 12:7-10,

7: "Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me--to keep me from exalting myself! 8: Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. 9: And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. 10: Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong."

Whether Paul's difficulties came as a result of the severe beating and stoning he took on this trip (14:19) or as a result of a disease causing visual impairment, we may never know, but his references to his condition lend weight to the thought that the stoning at Lystra seems to be the leading candidate for Paul's lifelong physical impairments. We have no specific detail relating his malady

with blindness or his eye trouble with an event or illness. We do know, however, that Paul came to have many helpers who traveled with him. He often sent them ahead to prepare the way for him. Others “ministered” to him. He had to stop and rest or be cared for from time to time as we shall see. There are many comments in Acts and in his letters about his weak appearance in the flesh, his infirmities and so on suggesting he became dependent upon God to supply help so he could “finish his course”. More on this in the chapter 14 commentary and beyond.

From JFB Bible Commentary:

“‘came to Antioch in Pisidia’--usually so called, to distinguish it from Antioch in Syria, from which they had started, though it actually lies in Phrygia, and almost due north from Perga. It was a long journey, and as it lay almost entirely through rugged mountain passes, while "rivers burst out at the base of huge cliffs, or dash down wildly through narrow ravines," it must have been a perilous one. The whole region was, and to this day is, infested by robbers, as ancient history and modern travels abundantly attest; and there can be but little doubt that to this very journey Paul many years after alludes, when he speaks amidst his "journeyings often," of his "perils of rivers" (as the word is), and his "perils of robbers" (2Co 11:26). If this journey were taken in May--and earlier than that the passes would have been blocked up with snow--it would account for their not staying at Perga, whose hot streets are then deserted; "men, women, and children, flocks, herds, camels, and asses, all ascending at the beginning of the hot season from the plains to the cool basin-like hollows on the mountains, moving in the same direction with our missionaries" [HOWSON].¹⁶

From William Ramsay, “St. Paul the Traveler”, “We learn, then, from Paul himself that an illness (we may confidently say a serious illness) was the occasion of his having originally preached to the churches of Galatia. The words do not necessarily imply that the illness began in Galatia; they are quite consistent with the interpretation that the illness was the reason why he came to be in Galatia and had the opportunity of preaching there; but they imply that the physical infirmity lasted for some considerable time, and was apparent to strangers, while he was in Galatia.”

Whatever the reason, Paul’s haste to get to Antioch is evident. When the Sabbath Day arrived, he and his entourage went to the synagogue there. From this activity, it does not appear Paul is ill or injured at this time.

13:15-16

15: “After the reading of the Law and the Prophets the synagogue officials sent to them, saying, "Brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it." 16: Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said, "Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen:

15-16: See note – verses 4-5. Customarily, one sat while speaking. In the Hellenistic world, standing was more customary. Paul may have stepped up to the front of the synagogue, but more likely stood in place. “and you who fear God...” These who “fear God” are Gentiles who believe in the God of the Jews, attend synagogue services but are not proselytes. Considered “second hand citizens” by the Jews, they were tolerated because of God’s command that the Jews bring the “light” to the Gentiles. There were apparently a considerable number in attendance as Paul greets them specifically.

¹⁶ From the Bible Commentary by Jamieson, Fausset and Brown.

13:17-24

17: "The God of this people Israel chose our fathers and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with an uplifted arm He led them out from it. 18: "For a period of about forty years He put up with them in the wilderness. 19: "When He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He distributed their land as an inheritance--*all of which took* about four hundred and fifty years. 20: "After these things He gave *them* judges until Samuel the prophet. 21: "Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. 22: "After He had removed him, He raised up David to be their king, concerning whom He also testified and said, 'I HAVE FOUND DAVID the son of Jesse, A MAN AFTER MY HEART, who will do all My will.' 23: "From the descendants of this man, according to promise, God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, 24: after John had proclaimed before His coming a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel."

17: In the typical Jewish style we see many times in Acts, Paul recounts a history of the Jews (abbreviated here in Luke's report). "Our fathers" – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Note the anthropomorphism, "and with an uplifted arm".

19: A note about the text of verse 19 and 20 in the KJV versus other newer translations. The "Textus Receptus" used by those who produced the KJV has been supplanted due to the evidence of the oldest extant manuscripts (Aleph, A, B, C, Vg., etc.) which place the phrase "about four hundred and fifty years" before the phrase "and after that" seen in verse 20 of the KJV rather than following the phrase "and after that". This is the better reading and is in agreement with the statement in I Kings 6:1. The difficulty found in the Textus Receptus (King James Version) disappears with the true text. The four hundred and fifty years runs roughly from the birth of Isaac to the actual conquest of Canaan and does not cover the period of the Judges.

22-23: Paul's emphasis is on King David and the promise made to him and his descendants (Note: I Samuel 13:13-14; 15:22-28; II Samuel 7:8-17; Psalm 132:11; Isaiah 11:1-16; Jeremiah 23:5; Zechariah 3:8). This promise Paul states is fulfilled in Jesus. He calls Jesus a "Savior". The word is "σωτηρ" ("sow-tehr") meaning one who rescues, restores, makes whole, makes well, makes safe, preserves from harm.

24: Before Jesus appeared, John heralded his coming and called the people to prepare by receiving a baptism of repentance in anticipation of Jesus' arrival. John the "Baptist" (better – "the baptiser") was well known throughout the empire even before Jesus began his ministry. See Acts 19:1-5.

13:25-26

25: "And while John was completing his course, he kept saying, 'What do you suppose that I am? I am not *He*. But behold, one is coming after me the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie.' 26: "Brethren, sons of Abraham's family, and those among you who fear God, to us the message of this salvation has been sent."

25: Paul quotes John from memory through the stories he was told (by whom?). The quotation holds the substance of what John said but is not quite an exact quote. (See Matthew 3:11, Mark 1:7; Luke 3:16; John 1:20-27)

26: Paul, noting his oneness with them, appeals to their hearts and in verses 27-29, looks to divide those who believe in Jesus from those who rejected Him and had Him crucified and buried. He moves from the pronoun “us” to “them”.

13:27-29

27: "For those who live in Jerusalem, and their rulers, recognizing neither Him nor the utterances of the prophets which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled *these* by condemning *Him*. 28: "And though they found no ground for *putting Him to death*, they asked Pilate that He be executed. 29: "When they had carried out all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the cross and laid Him in a tomb."

27: "...recognizing neither Him nor the utterances of the prophets" the KJV uses "knew Him not..." which is actually better when one realizes that "to know" used in this sense pictures an intimate relationship or faith in the person or object mentioned. Their faithlessness and deliberate ignorance allowed them to actually be the agents of fulfillment in this evil deed.

28: Paul attests to Jesus' innocence. Though accused of "blasphemy" (an unproven charge and unacceptable to Pilate (and the Romans) as a cause of trial or punishment), the Jews trumped up a charge of treason to get Pilate's attention.

29: "...all that was written concerning Him..." Paul has done some serious study and thinking regarding this. "Cross" – not "stauros" but "ξύλον" – "Xulon", tree or wood. "Tomb" is a place of memorial, not a simple grave.

13:30-37

30: "But God raised Him from the dead; 31: and for many days He appeared to those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, the very ones who are now His witnesses to the people. 32: "And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers, 33: that God has fulfilled this *promise* to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, 'YOU ARE MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU.' 34: "As for the fact that He raised Him up from the dead, no longer to return to decay, He has spoken in this way: 'I WILL GIVE YOU THE HOLY *and SURE blessings* OF DAVID.' 35: "Therefore He also says in another *Psalm*, 'YOU WILL NOT ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY.' 36: "For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers and underwent decay; 37: but He whom God raised did not undergo decay.

30: The foundation stone for the truth of what Paul is preaching. See: Acts 17:18; 24:21; 26:23; Romans 1:4; I Corinthians 15:12-21; II Timothy 2:8.

31: Paul sites the witnesses of the resurrection his hearers can still interview if they would so choose.

32-37: Paul's tone is excited. He is bringing them "good news" that the promise made by God centuries ago has been fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus. He goes on to quote the passages that were first quoted by Jesus Himself and then by Peter on the Day of Pentecost (2:24-32). Jesus, who

did not suffer “decay” but was raised from the dead fulfills these prophetic words. The words could not have applied to David himself who did suffer decay, but were fulfilled in Jesus, David’s “son”.

13:38-41

38: "Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, 39: and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses. 40: "Therefore take heed, so that the thing spoken of in the Prophets may not come upon *you*: :41: 'BEHOLD, YOU SCOFFERS, AND MARVEL, AND PERISH; FOR I AM ACCOMPLISHING A WORK IN YOUR DAYS, A WORK WHICH YOU WILL NEVER BELIEVE, THOUGH SOMEONE SHOULD DESCRIBE IT TO YOU.'"

38: Paul concludes with an invitation to faith both in the message he is preaching and in the One he is preaching about. “Forgiveness of sins” means release from and freedom from, not just on a temporary basis, but forever. This “lifts” the penalty away from the “sinner” and he no longer has to fear it.

39: The Jewish dependence upon the “Law of Moses” did not free them at all but kept them in bondage to sin (verse 38). Robertson writes, “This is the doctrine of grace that will prove a stumbling block to the Jews with their ceremonial works and foolishness to the Greeks with their abstract philosophical ethics (1Co 1:23-25). It is a new and strange doctrine to the people of Antioch.”¹⁷

40-41: A warning for those who may scoff or reject the offer. Paul has described the work to them and now it is up to them to make a decision. He quotes Habakkuk 1:5 (LXX – The Septuagint). All the writers of the New Testament use the Greek Old Testament (LXX) as their source for quotations. They do not translate the Hebrew into Greek, and if they do, it coincidentally matches the LXX exactly.

13: 42-43

42: As Paul and Barnabas were going out, the people kept begging that these things might be spoken to them the next Sabbath. 43: Now when *the meeting of* the synagogue had broken up, many of the Jews and of the God-fearing proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, were urging them to continue in the grace of God.

42-43: “...continue in the grace of God”, suggests that there were those among the congregation who believed.

13:44-49

44: The next Sabbath nearly the whole city assembled to hear the word of the Lord. 45: But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and *began* contradicting the

¹⁷ “Word Pictures In The New Testament”, Volume II, A.T. Robertson, Harper and Brothers, 1931.

things spoken by Paul, and were blaspheming. 46: Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. 47: "For so the Lord has commanded us, 'I HAVE PLACED YOU AS A LIGHT FOR THE GENTILES, THAT YOU MAY BRING SALVATION TO THE END OF THE EARTH.'" 48: When the Gentiles heard this, they *began* rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. 49: And the word of the Lord was being spread through the whole region.

44: "Nearly the whole city" ... a hyperbole. No doubt a large assembly of both Jews and Gentiles who had heard of the message and effect Paul and Barnabas had made the previous Saturday (Sabbath).

45: The jealousy of the Jews points to the synagogue leadership, as their jealousy relates to the size of the crowds Paul and Barnabas were drawing. This still goes on today. In ministerial meetings one minister meeting another for the first time nearly always asks two questions. "Where are you?" meaning "Where is your church located?", "How big is your church?" meaning "How many people do you minister to", in order to compare themselves and their success to you, hoping to find validation or something meaningful about themselves. Once they have gathered this information, they wander off to find someone else to compare themselves with.

"...and *began* contradicting the things spoken by Paul, and were blaspheming".... Paul and Barnabas were there as guests and the Jewish leadership had the right to interrupt them and contradict them at any time thus disrupting their message. In doing so, they "blasphemed" which means they attributed the things of God and the Holy Spirit to evil or Satan. A transliteration from the Greek "βλασφημεω" meaning to slander or profane sacred things.

46: The response of Paul and Barnabas is clear. Their responsibility was first to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel" and this reveals they had knowledge of Jesus' words to His disciples seen in Matthew 10:5-6. These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them, "Do not go in *the* way of *the* Gentiles, and do not enter *any* city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." This was Paul's first effort to move his teaching from the synagogue to a neutral location. It was to become his pattern in nearly every place he visited and spoke.

47: Paul quotes Isaiah 49:6, "He says, "It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth." Note also: Isaiah 42:6-7, "I am the LORD, I have called You in righteousness, I will also hold You by the hand and watch over You, And I will appoint You as a covenant to the people, As a light to the nations, To open blind eyes, To bring out prisoners from the dungeon And those who dwell in darkness from the prison." This was not a goal of the Jews, as the post-exilic rabbis formed the custom of avoiding mingling with Gentiles because it was a violation of the laws of "clean and unclean".

Here Jesus' words in Mark 7:6-9 are pertinent, "And He said to them, "Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, PUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME. 'BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.' "Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men." He was also saying to them, "You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition" . Speaking regarding the "Corban" rule and other matters,

He said in verse 13, "... *thus* invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down; and you do many things such as that." From the time of Abraham God intended His people to be chosen vessels to bring light to the nations (Gentiles). Note: Genesis 12:1-3, Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you; 2: And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; 3: And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed." And, Genesis 22:18 "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

48-49: We don't know where they met to teach, but the result was phenomenal. The Gentiles, previously denied the hope of eternal life, were now granted it through faith in Christ. "...and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed." Appointed is "τασσω" ("tassoh"), an accounting and military term, meaning, "to place in orderly arrangement", indicating that those "designated", "listed in the order", believed to eternal life. In other words, an order was filled or fulfilled, likely indicating that the promise finally came to fruition.

This does not mean that only certain ones were previously chosen to believe, but that something found its fulfillment, most likely in context, the promise made to Abram and repeated through Isaiah. The literal translation is: "and they believed, many/all of them who had been designated to eternal life". The spreading of the word throughout the whole region may indicate that others took it from Antioch as well as Paul and Barnabas. Churches sprang up on the west coast of Asia Minor and in other places that Paul did not found.

13:50-52

51: But the Jews incited the devout women of prominence and the leading men of the city, and instigated a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district. 51: But they shook off the dust of their feet *in protest* against them and went to Iconium. 52: And the disciples were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

50: "The devout women of prominence" were Gentile proselytes of Judaism having come from a position of prominence. Women were able to achieve positions of prominence in many of the major Greco-Roman cities rather than in other parts of the empire. That position was accorded them due to many diverse reasons. One reason may have been because many of the Greco/Roman cities had temples to goddesses and the women were considered closer to the goddesses than men were. Often they were priestesses, oracles, or temple prostitutes and were accorded prominence due to their position in the religion. Other women were married to prominent men in the city. Still others may have been successful business people like Lydia of Philippi. The Jews "incited" these women and the leading men of the city to persuade the Gentile population to reject Paul and Barnabas' message and have them thrown out of the city. This "inciting" probably included threats in terms of their relationship with God for the word "παροτρυνω" ("par-ot-ru-noh") carries with it the idea of "spurring" a horse.

51: "shook off the dust" – a figure of speech (See also: Mark 10:14), similar in intent to the phrase "washing their hands" of the place and those who rejected them. Iconium was about 50 miles to the southeast of Antioch.

52: Again, showing that the Holy Spirit is a continual presence as well as a presence noted at

specific times (for example: 13:9)

Chapter Fourteen

14:1-7

1: In Iconium they entered the synagogue of the Jews together, and spoke in such a manner that a large number of people believed, both of Jews and of Greeks. 2: But the Jews who disbelieved stirred up the minds of the Gentiles and embittered them against the brethren. 3: Therefore they spent a long time *there* speaking boldly *with reliance* upon the Lord, who was testifying to the word of His grace, granting that signs and wonders be done by their hands. 4: But the people of the city were divided; and some sided with the Jews, and some with the apostles. 5: And when an attempt was made by both the Gentiles and the Jews with their rulers, to mistreat and to stone them, 6: they became aware of it and fled to the cities of Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe, and the surrounding region; 7: and there they continued to preach the gospel.

1: Both Paul and Barnabas were involved in speaking to the crowds in the synagogue with the result that both Jews and Greeks (either proselytes or God-Fearers) came to faith in Christ.

2: Disbelieving (literally “un-persuaded”) Jews (probably synagogue leaders and those accompanying them) went to the Gentiles in the city to stir them up against the apostles. Their ability to do this may have been similar to that which caused the riots in Ephesus some years later. The Jews may well have pointed out that the local religious presence and the commerce related to it was being undermined. Every city had a temple to the patron god or goddess and considerable activity and commerce was attached to it (see:14:12). A threat to this would have drawn strong opposition. The Jews would use this opportunity even though they themselves despised the idolatry. They objected to the Gospel even more because it threatened their own “commerce”.

3-4: The activities of the apostles, and accompanying signs and wonders, were causing quite a stir in the city and the city was becoming divided. Their boldness was of the Holy Spirit who was giving them the message to speak, which was of the grace of God. This would, of course, fly in the face of the legalism the Jews emphasized. The signs and wonders may be described, in part, in verses 8-10. The message had set the city against itself. Note that the word “apostle” is also given to Barnabas. The word means “to stand, arrange, or prepare - off, from or away”. It is used of those sent forth by God (or The Holy Spirit) on a mission.

5: The division motivated those opposed to the apostle’s message, and especially the effect it was having upon the city, to engage city officials in authorizing whatever had to be done to stop Paul and Barnabas.

6-7: Becoming aware of the impending plot, Paul and Barnabas fled the city and went east to the district of Lycaonia, of the province of Galatia, specifically the cities of Lystra and Derbe. Lystra was about twenty miles from Iconium.

14:8-10

8: At Lystra a man was sitting who had no strength in his feet, lame from his mother's womb, who had never walked. 9: This man was listening to Paul as he spoke, who, when he had fixed his gaze on him and had seen that he had faith to be made well, 10: said with a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet." And he leaped up and *began* to walk.

8: Lystra was a Roman colony. This far from Israel, the culture was quite unlike anything Paul and Barnabas had experienced to date, perhaps in their lives. Jews married Gentiles, the indigenous language was foreign to them and the religious scene was basically heathen and idolatrous. Being on the east-west trade route brought the inhabitants opportunity for income. The high altitude lent itself to raising livestock, especially sheep and goats, rather than to agriculture. There is no mention that the apostles entered a synagogue here, and it appears they were preaching in an outdoor area, perhaps in the market place or "agoura" where there was a public forum. The language of their message is unknown to us, but probably Greek. Both Paul and Barnabas were fluent in at least three languages, Aramaic, Greek, and Hebrew. It is possible that The Holy Spirit was once again producing a tongue for them to speak, but this is unlikely as we see in verse 11ff. The story of the lame man mentioned here is quite similar to the story in Acts 3:2.

9: "...had faith to be made well" not in quantity but in content. The lame man had placed his life, hope and case into the Redeemer's hands.

10: "...said with a loud voice" indicating that Paul wished the crowd to hear and witness that which would glorify the Lord of which he was speaking. The man, feeling the power in his legs, eagerly leaped up and walked around.

14:11-13

11: When the crowds saw what Paul had done, they raised their voice, saying in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have become like men and have come down to us." 12: And they *began* calling Barnabas, Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. 13: The priest of Zeus, whose *temple* was just outside the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds.

11-12: It appears that neither Paul nor Barnabas initially understood what the people were shouting about. Zeus was the patron god of the city as a temple built to him was there. Probably Barnabas, being older and more impressive, was the reason he was named Zeus. Zeus is the Greek name for the Roman god Jupiter, and Hermes is the Greek for the Roman god Mercury (the messenger god). There was a legend in Lystra that Zeus and Hermes had visited the area eons ago and went unrecognized except for a few elderly people. The citizens vowed not to miss them should they appear again.

13: The priest of Zeus appeared with oxen wearing garlands of flowers in preparation of sacrifice. Oxen or bullocks would have been the appropriate sacrifice for Zeus. It became obvious to Paul and Barnabas after a short while that the citizens, led by the priest of Zeus were going to offer sacrifice to them. It looks like they may have asked someone what was going on and were then told of the plans.

14:14-18

14: But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their robes and rushed out into the crowd, crying out 15: and saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you, and preach the gospel to you that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, WHO MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM. 16: "In the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways; 17: and yet He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness." 18: *Even* saying these things, with difficulty they restrained the crowds from offering sacrifice to them.

14-18: Paul and Barnabas were on a rostrum or platform. They tore their clothes and left that elevated area and went into the crowd telling them that they were just men like all of them. The tearing of clothes indicated, from ancient times, being in the presence of an intense horror or blasphemy contrary to God or God's will. The entire point of Paul and Barnabas' message was to turn them from their vain religious worship to the true God. Instead, they were invoking their religious beliefs and applying them to the apostles.

14:19

14:19: But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.

19: After the furor of the preceding events, it is clear that the crowds were evidently confused or unclear about who Paul and Barnabas were and what their message was. Meanwhile, Jews from Antioch and Iconium had gathered impressive numbers and persons following Paul and Barnabas to Lystra. The work of the apostles was largely (but not completely) negated by them. Having won over the crowds, they selected Paul as their main target and stoned him to "death" and dragged his body outside the city and threw it in the rubbish heap.

This was a vicious attack. (See the notes on 7:58) Paul was unmercifully attacked by enraged citizens and opponents who had come from as far as 120 miles away. The stoning not only caused extensive skeletal and internal damage, but heavy bleeding and external damage as well. To determine a person to be dead, the stoning continued until the person neither bled nor breathed. There is little doubt that this beating was the cause for Paul's lifelong infirmities, especially regarding his vision. (See comment on 13:13-14) Yet the following narrative leaves us in the dark as to his specific injuries.

14:20

14:20: But while the disciples stood around him, he got up and entered the city. The next day he went away with Barnabas to Derbe.

20: "...disciples". The trip had not been a total loss. Some believed and had become disciples of Jesus. The word disciple means "student", "follower", one that undergoes a "discipline of learning or training". We know from 16:1-2 that Timothy was from Lystra. His mother Eunice was a Jewess and a believer married to a "Greek" who was not a believer. Timothy likely came to faith during this first visit and may have been one of the disciples mentioned here by Luke. If so, he was still a lad, perhaps in his teens or early twenties.

Paul “got up and entered the city”. Enough time had passed prior to Paul’s resuscitation that the crowds had dispersed and no one was around to witness this event. Perhaps evening had begun to fall, darkness masking the movement. Paul was no doubt assisted in getting up and into the city where a new brother or sister gave him refuge and aid. Luke’s brief description of this is a mystery. He doesn’t note how Paul survived or how he came to be able to get up and walk into the city, let alone leave the city the next day for a forty to fifty mile journey to Derbe. There is no mention of the Lord in all this. So we are left to wonder exactly how Paul survived this ordeal, not discounting the Lord’s intervention.

14:21-24

21: After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, 22: strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and *saying*, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." 23: When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed. 24: They passed through Pisidia and came into Pamphylia.

21-22: Derbe, a smaller city, did not seem to present the opposition as had the larger cities so many disciples were made. Although the trip back to Antioch of Syria is much shorter by going overland through the Cilician gates to Tarsus, Paul decides to return to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch to encourage the disciples. No doubt his own physical condition became an asset in that it witnessed to how much Paul believed in Jesus. This must have prompted the statement "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." (See Galatians 4:12-20) His reluctance to go on to Tarsus may be related to two things: 1. He is convinced that his injuries and survival will be a strong testimony to those new converts in the churches of Galatia, and 2: It could be that his family in Tarsus had disowned him, and he had little reason or desire to return there. If he had been married (likely for a man in his position-this will be discussed thoroughly later on) it is quite conceivable that even his wife returned to her family and “Saul” became “persona non grata” among family, friends and associates in Tarsus. However, there is evidence that not all of his family rejected him. Paul’s nephew (and possibly his sister) had left Tarsus and moved to Jerusalem. We cannot risk the conjecture that they also had become believers, but they were concerned about Paul when a plot was hatched to kill him while he was incarcerated in Jerusalem and Paul’s nephew came to warn him.¹⁸

23: In each city there came to be a group of believers. Normally these believers met in the house of one of their number. An elder was appointed to each group, usually an older man who had wisdom, patience, compassion and a clear knowledge of the gospel. These men were basically nominated by the group to which they belonged, approved by Paul and Barnabas, and prayed for with the laying on of hands. Over the next few years, these Galatian churches, under attack from the Jewish segment in town, fell from a clear understanding of the gospel and God’s grace to a mixture of Judaism (legalism) and Christianity. This mixture still plagues the church today. Paul’s angry letter (Galatians) to these churches highlights this struggle.

24: The Pisidian district was the same one that they had traveled through to get to Antioch.

14:25

¹⁸ See comment on 23:16

14:25: When they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia.

25: During their first visit to Perga (13:13-14) there is no mention of a ministry there. Attalia is the main seaport of Pamphylia

14:26-28

26: From there they sailed to Antioch, from which they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had accomplished. 27: When they had arrived and gathered the church together, they *began* to report all things that God had done with them and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. 28: And they spent a long time with the disciples.

26: Luke notes, by way of review, that Antioch was the church that had sent them out.

27: The report of Paul and Barnabas focused on how their work enabled the Gentiles to come to faith in Jesus, thus fulfilling the prophets.

28: "...A long time". Their next missionary journey was some two to three years away.

Chapter Fifteen

15:1-3

1: Some men came down from Judea and *began* teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." 2: And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, *the brethren* determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue. 3: Therefore, being sent on their way by the church, they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and were bringing great joy to all the brethren.

1: We have our first introduction to the "Judaizers" or, the "party of the circumcision". These men were Jews who claimed faith in Jesus as the Messiah (or who really believed and were caught up in this movement) but insisted that true believers must keep the Law of Moses to be righteous as well as the rightful heirs to the Kingdom of God. The test of true faith became physical circumcision, which was, of course, directed at the Gentile converts. This teaching spread throughout the churches and caused great confusion and division among the new believers, especially among the Gentiles. The motives behind this movement were mixed, from sincere belief in this "necessity", to a means of keeping Gentiles out of the faith altogether. Many were from the party of the Pharisees who had come to Antioch to "straighten out" the new believers as well as Paul, Barnabas and other leaders.

Assuming Galatians 2 reflects this time, Peter was also there, but not quite sure which side to support. This seems odd in light of Peter's experience earlier as Luke relates in chapters 10-12 of Acts. But Peter was a simple, uneducated man, and the implications of this argument may have escaped him. He may be alluding to this in II Peter 3:15-16, "...and regard the patience of our Lord *as* salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to

you, as also in all *his* letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.” The reason he sat with the Jews in Antioch may have been as simple as having fellowship with those he knew and was comfortable with not recognizing Paul’s point of view in doing so. It had been, by now, some ten years since Peter’s encounter with Cornelius and other Gentiles. This conflict became one of the main reasons Paul later wrote many letters to the churches, his clearest presentation of the truth regarding this matter being found in his letter to the Galatians.

2: “Great dissension and debate” indicates from the Greek that the debate was not only strongly contested but that it went on for a long time with each party standing firm in their own position. It was determined that the issue should be brought to the Apostles at Jerusalem for a decision. We are not told how Paul and his companions felt about this, but it is likely from what transpired in Antioch, as related by Paul in Galatians, chapter 2, that this was a time filled with difficulty for him (Galatians chapter 2).

“Paul, Barnabas and ‘some others’”. Apparently Titus, a Gentile, accompanied them along with others (Galatians 2:3)

3: “Being sent on their way” implies the church supplied their provisions and bathed them in prayer. It appears that those “who came down from Judea” went back separately from Paul and his companions because, as they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, they took time to encourage the new believers there. These new converts came as a result of others bringing the word to them. Acts 11:19 notes, “So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone.” Note also Acts 8:1, 5; 1: “Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him (Stephen) to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and *Samaria*, except the apostles.” 5: “Philip went down to the city of Samaria and *began* proclaiming Christ to them.” (Bold italics mine) Apparently their news about Gentile converts brought joy to both Jewish and Gentile believers alike. It is quite possible that Peter himself was with them witnessing of his own experience in this regard. He tells the story once again when they reach Jerusalem.

15:4-6

4: “When they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. 5: But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, “It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses.” 6: The apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter.”

4-5: It evidently took a considerable amount of time to reach Jerusalem. When they did so, their arrival was a public reception by the whole church, including the apostles as well as those who stood against the free dissemination of salvation to the Gentiles. The report of Paul and Barnabas to the church, likely at the home of John Mark, brought about the response from “believing” Pharisees, “It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses.” This was not a suggestion but a mandate, even a command. The word “necessary” is actually “must”, a binding condition. The intractable stand by these fellow believers had caused great consternation for Paul

but forced him to justify his position to the Church, something he had been focused on since the opposition came to Antioch (note: Galatians 2:4-5).

6: The leadership of the Jerusalem church, both apostles and elders, assembled privately to look into the matter and render a decision. Thus began the critically important “Jerusalem Conference”. The importance of this conference cannot be underestimated or passed by lightly. The outcome, either way would affect for all time the message of salvation, the mission of the church and the understanding of why Christ came and died in the first place. All of subsequent world history would be determined by the outcome of this conference. This is no exaggeration if one thinks about it. Paul and Barnabas were also included in the private meeting. Peter, James and John as well as James the brother of Jesus and other apostles and elders were present (Galatians 2). This may have been the only time Paul and John met.

15:7-11

7: After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe. 8: "And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; 9: and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. 10: "Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? 11: "But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are."

7: There was disunity among those present at first. Both sides had strong, foundational arguments on their side and were given opportunity to air their views. (These arguments still exist in the same debate raging today in nearly every quarter of the church). Finally, Peter is prompted to rise and tell his story clarifying, by his experience, God’s intent as far as the Gentiles are concerned. He recalls “the early days” some ten years ago, now. The discussion, and perhaps Paul and Barnabas’s review of the Scriptures bearing witness to this point, may have prompted Peter’s story. In some way, he had become convinced of Paul’s point of view and had solidified his position before he stood and spoke. Peter’s statement would carry a much heavier weight and impact than that of Paul or Barnabas, relative newcomers to the apostolic ministry.

8-9: The Holy Spirit falling upon the Gentiles in Peter’s presence was irrefutable proof that God had indeed intended the Gentiles to receive the Gospel, and had accepted them without the condition of circumcision or any thing else. God’s acceptance of them was solely through their faith in His Son. Even in the case of Cornelius, of whom Peter spoke, we have a Gentile, a Roman Centurion, who had not been circumcised. He was a “God fearer”, not a proselyte. So he did not engage in the Jewish rituals, but had a sincere faith in the true God. This faith brought him and (others there) to faith in Christ and they had their hearts cleansed showing that God made no distinction between Jew and Gentile in Christ. (Their baptism evidenced this cleansing.)

10: A potent conclusion. Peter makes his point with authority. Putting “God to the test” would require those in opposition to Peter, Paul and Barnabas to place God in the position of “proving” the truth of Peter’s position to them if they were to insist on placing this yoke upon those whom God had already accepted. The commandment to them regarding this was clear, “You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested *Him* at Massah. (Deuteronomy 6:17) Peter thus lays the stakes out for the opposition. He also uses employs the word “yoke” in his rhetorical

question, no doubt reflective of Jesus' words, and appeals to their honesty. This would be a good place for him to pause a moment to give the opposition a moment to consider his challenge.

11: "For we..." Peter places himself firmly in the position of Paul, Barnabas and the others who have been arguing for salvation by grace through faith alone, regardless of one's background or upbringing. This is a momentous conclusion by Peter who is stating that everything he has been taught, everything he has believed about God's work in and through the Jews, as well as his adopting the Jewish animosity toward all outsiders has been misconstrued and filled with error. A difficult and painful admission at best. He has placed himself on the same level as the very people he has been taught to despise all his life.

It does not seem coincidental that Peter's involvement with the Gentiles years ago, an involvement he was neither prepared for nor expected, would ultimately result in a testimony that caused this critical conference over ten years later to turn the corner. Also not coincidentally, this is the last mention of Peter in the Book of Acts. What an exit!

15:12

12: All the people kept silent, and they were listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were relating what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.

12: The most important silence in history. Contemplation. The scripture, "Be still, and know that I *am* God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth" never had such impact on a body of people as it did that day. (Psalm 46:10)

Paul and Barnabas now have the attention of the full assembly and follow up with reports similar to Peter's as to what God had done among the Gentiles in recent years through the ministry at Antioch and on into Galatia. They had even brought Titus¹⁹ with them (Galatians 2) to testify to God's grace granted to him, a Gentile, if necessary. Paul's own injuries and suffering testified to his commitment and dedication to the ministry. The evidence was overwhelming. Hearts and minds came to agreement that day, salvation in Christ was, "glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people" even as the angel announced to the shepherds so long ago. It seem, as one examines both this report and the one Paul gives in Galatians 2, that the assembly was more prone to listen and hearken to what Barnabas said than to what Paul had to report.

15:13-21

13: "After they had stopped speaking, James answered, saying, "Brethren, listen to me. 14: "Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name. 15: "With this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written, 16: 'AFTER THESE THINGS I will return, AND I WILL REBUILD THE TABERNACLE OF DAVID WHICH HAS FALLEN, AND I WILL REBUILD ITS RUINS, AND I WILL RESTORE IT, 17: SO THAT THE REST OF MANKIND MAY SEEK THE LORD, AND ALL THE GENTILES WHO ARE CALLED BY MY NAME,' 18: SAYS THE LORD, WHO MAKES THESE THINGS KNOWN FROM LONG AGO. 19: "Therefore it is my judgment

¹⁹ Titus is a Gentile associate of Paul's from Antioch of Syria. His ministry with Paul is mentioned in Paul's letters, but Luke makes not one mention of him in Acts. His travels with Paul must be partly of conjecture in this study.

that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, 20: but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood. 21: "For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath."

13: Although Luke does not say so, a great miracle has occurred. An assembly of people of one very firm persuasion was transformed to the very persuasion they had strongly opposed. Even James, the Lord's brother, who himself may have had questions was persuaded. It was he who had sent men to Antioch to find out what was being taught and those men had caused a great debate to occur prompting the church at Antioch to send the matter back to Jerusalem for a decision. James may not have been convinced of Paul's position until Peter finally spoke up. After Peter's speech and Paul and Barnabas' report, the assembly was moved to the truth of the gospel. After all had spoken, James, the leader of the assembly and of the Jerusalem church, asked for the attention of everyone. The entire church respected his judgment and wisdom as he had been given the position of leadership over both the church and the counsel.

14-18: "Simeon" is the Hebrew form of "Simon", Peter's proper name. Impressed with the fact that Peter makes this argument, James agrees that indeed God, through the prophets, intended the kingdom of God to include the Gentiles and quotes Amos 9:11-12 (LXX) as support of this conclusion. In doing so, he has to conclude that the teaching of the rabbis both ancient and contemporary regarding the uncleanness of the Gentiles is in error. This is momentous!

The passage from Amos (c. 750 B.C.) is significant. In chapter 9, God concludes His judgment and verdict upon disobedient and idolatrous Israel as He predicts the destruction of Israel (at the hands of the Assyrians). Israel is not to be utterly destroyed (verse 8) but shaken and sifted. The fallen booth (or tabernacle) of David will be raised up again and the kingdom will be restored and include all the nations (or Gentiles) called by His name. The Talmud views this passage as messianic and a picture of God's kingdom on earth where the gentiles will also be included in God's rule.

19: It is quite clear from this verse that James has indeed been placed in the position of presiding over both the church and this council. "It is my judgment", indicates he has the authority to make the final decision. In light of both the abundant scriptures quoted and the testimony of Peter, Paul, Barnabas and others as well, and remembering Jesus' words, James is persuaded to render a confident decision. His decision changed the course of history for the world. "Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles".

20-21: Some view this "condition" to be contained in a letter from the apostles in Jerusalem as an imposition of law upon a decision of grace. However, it is only a recognition that Jews are terribly offended by these matters and that the Gentiles need to refrain from causing a stumbling block to their Jewish brethren by engaging in them, thus reducing a cause for conflict and broken fellowship between them. This matter was no doubt a part of the concerns of those present and is handled nicely by James. It is a concession that does not diminish the truth of the gospel. The Jews are reminded frequently about these matters at the Synagogue, and it is incumbent upon the Gentiles to control their freedom around their Jewish brethren. Paul raises this issue again in his letters, notably in I Corinthians 8-9 and Romans 14.

22: "Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas--Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren, 23: and they sent this letter by them, "The apostles and the brethren who are elders, to the brethren in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia who are from the Gentiles, greetings. 24: "Since we have heard that some of our number to whom we gave no instruction have disturbed you with *their* words, unsettling your souls, 25: it seemed good to us, having become of one mind, to select men to send to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, 26: men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 27: "Therefore we have sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will also report the same things by word *of mouth*. 28: "For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials: 29: that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell." 30: So when they were sent away, they went down to Antioch; and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. 31: When they had read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement."

22: The entire church body was reconvened and the decision announced. Everyone came to agreement that this was indeed the will of God and agreed to send Silas (also known as Silvanus) as well as Barsabbas back to Antioch with Paul, Barnabas and Titus. These men sent back to Antioch will bear witness of the matter relieving Paul and Barnabas of being doubted in their report. One is a Hellenistic Jew, (possibly even a Gentile), and the other a native Jew. This would make a balanced team when explaining the letter to the church at Antioch. Both men were highly respected (verses 22 and 26) and called "prophets" (verse 32).

23: The letter is addressed to Gentiles in the areas Paul and Barnabas had already ministered. This designation, no doubt, was by their own request. This is the first recorded written document of the church, and of the New Testament.

24: James refers to the men who had come from Jerusalem and caused this stir in the first place. They acted on their own, leaving the impression they represented the views of the Jerusalem leadership. James notes his failure to instruct the men who came to them but distances himself and the Jerusalem leadership from their arguments. "Unsettling your souls" – to "subvert", (literally: "to throw about as furniture or baggage - their very life", "ransack their house" so to speak.

25: "Of one mind" means "a meeting of the minds in one accord". This confirms the decision and any who may object are set aside. "...beloved Barnabas and Paul". The warmth and affection for these men by the Jerusalem church underscore their ministry. Note that Barnabas' name once again is placed first. This may be due to his being older than Paul in age as, well as in the Lord, or due to his earlier prominence in the Jerusalem church.

Paul later writes of this result in Galatians (2:2-10).

2: "It was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but *I did so* in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain. 3: But not even Titus, who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. 4: But *it was* because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to

bring us into bondage. 5: But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you. 6: But from those who were of high reputation (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—well, those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me. 7: But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter *had been* to the circumcised 8: (for He who effectually worked for Peter in *his* apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles), 9: and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we *might go* to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. 10: *They only asked* us to remember the poor--the very thing I also was eager to do.

Paul's tone smacks of frustration or irritation when he recalls the Jerusalem council. No doubt Paul's personality and attitude, let alone his reputation as a "Johnny come lately" coupled with their trust of Barnabas caused the Jerusalem leadership to give Barnabas a better reception (see comment on verse 12). On the other hand, Paul was having to constantly battle those who questioned or doubted his legitimacy as an "apostle" since he never walked with Jesus. No doubt this caused some frustration, especially when he had to call upon the "letter" for support. His words about the apostles being "reputed pillars" smacks of his feelings.

26: Referring to Judas (Barsabbas) and Silas.

27: To confirm the legitimacy of the letter. Many precautions are being taken to assure the church at Antioch that this is truly from the leading apostles in Jerusalem and the church. This is to prevent any objection on the part of Judaizers.

28: James employs not only the leadership in supporting this decision, but the guidance and confirmation of The Holy Spirit as well. Much time was spent to gain spiritual assurance that their decision was indeed of God. It was thus agreed that a small burden to bear (not a "yoke") be laid upon them.

29: Common practices of the Greeks. (See comment on verses 20-21) "...You will do well." "This will go a long way in bringing about a goodly fellowship with your Jewish brethren." Coming from Jews who have granted the Gentiles the grace of God in Christ as well as they, the Gentiles who knew no better gratefully receive advice. "Farewell" ... not, "Goodbye", but a blessing; "be well, healthy, happy and whole".

30-31: The letter was sent on its way by the hand of Judas and Silas in the company of Paul, Barnabas, Titus and a number of others. When the report was given, the letter read and attested to by Silas and Judas, the church (especially the Gentiles) cheered and was brought together once again and assured and comforted in their faith and freedom in Christ.

15:32-35

32: Judas and Silas, also being prophets themselves, encouraged and strengthened the brethren with a lengthy message. 33: After they had spent time *there*, they were sent away from the brethren in peace to those who had sent them out. 34: [But it seemed good to Silas to remain there.] 35: But Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and preaching with many others also, the word of the Lord.

32: It is easy to ascertain what the essence of the message was from what we have learned. For the Jews, the truth of the scripture and understanding of God's plan all along, as well as the encouragement to discern things they had learned all their lives, could be retained while other traditions and attitudes could be discarded according to the Word of God itself. For the Gentiles, a recognition of their place in God's plan of redemption in Christ, and for all, a realization that faith in Christ supercedes the law and removes them from its penalty and mandate making them all new equal citizens in God's kingdom. A New Covenant had been instituted in accordance with God's promise to Abraham as reiterated by the prophets and it had replaced the Old Covenant.

33-35: "...some time there..." Usually indicating a time frame in months. Judas, and others who had come with them from Jerusalem, left for home. Verse 34 is very late in the manuscript evidence and can be discounted as legitimate. Verse 33 suggests that both Silas and Judas returned to Jerusalem, and 35 seems to indicate the same. Silas was likely sent for between verses 39 and 40. In any case, it appears that Paul and Silas had hit it off.

15:36-39

36: After some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, *and see* how they are." 37: Barnabas wanted to take John, called Mark, along with them also. 38: But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work.

36: "...some days..." again, a period of months, perhaps even up to two or three years. We are now roughly around the year 50-51 A.D., some seventeen years after the Day of Pentecost and about eleven to twelve years after Peter's experience with Cornelius at Caesarea. It has been about a year to a year and a half since Paul and Barnabas' first missionary journey.

37-38: Barnabas no doubt felt that his cousin deserved a second chance. John was willing to go. Paul, however, was unconvinced and would have none of it (See notes on Chapter 13:13-14). His stubbornness was impenetrable, making it difficult to work with him as we see in verse 39..

15:39-41

39: And there occurred such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. 40: But Paul chose Silas and left, being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord. 41: And he was traveling through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

39: This was no doubt a painful separation. The words "sharp disagreement" ("παροξυσμος", "par-ox-oos-mos") from which we get our word "paroxysm", means that there were words used that were cutting and unkind like a blade cutting to the heart. Barnabas would vouch for Mark, but Paul may have thought of Proverbs 25:19, "Like a bad tooth and an unsteady foot is confidence in a faithless man in time of trouble." Sadly, neither Barnabas nor Mark is mentioned in the Book of Acts again. But happily, we do know there was reconciliation all the way around from the later letters of Paul and Peter. See: I Corinthians 9:6; Colossians 4:10; II Thessalonians 3:17; II Timothy 4:11; Philemon 1:24; I Peter 5:13. Barnabas and John left on their journey, leaving Paul to seek another man to accompany him on his.

40: The situation was resolved, probably with the help of other cooler heads in the church. Mentioned first is Barnabas, who, standing by his cousin John Mark, sailed to Cyprus, Barnabas' home. This was the first stop on the first missionary journey in which John accompanied Barnabas and "Saul". One can see from this that Paul and Barnabas came to an agreement of some sort. Barnabas and Mark could cover the work the two of them had been involved in. This would be best for the new believers there and explanations would not become necessary to questions that would otherwise and inevitably be asked which could cause a distraction in the mission. Sometime later, choosing (or perhaps sending for) Silas, Paul was committed by the church to the wider mission. John Mark returned to Jerusalem later on and between this time (c.50 A.D.) and c.61 A.D. when Mark is with Paul in Rome, he writes or has written his gospel which he may have hand delivered to Paul and the Church at Rome.

41: Paul and Silas, along with (possibly) Titus and others, left and took the overland trade route, up through Syria and into Cilicia. They would have passed through or close to Tarsus, but there is no mention of a stop there, lending weight to the probability that Paul had come to an irreconcilable point in the relationship with his family.²⁰ This may well have applied to a wife and even children. Later, in I Corinthians 7:7-8 in speaking about marital relations, Paul comments to the unmarried that he wishes that, "all men were even as I myself am. However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that. But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I." Here he is stating that he is unmarried and not obligated to a wife. This is made apparent in the context of the same epistle, chapter 9, verse 5, "Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?"

But in Acts 26:10, he comments about the persecution of the church and notes, "And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them." The casting was of a pebble, black for death and white for life dropped into an urn. If Paul's language is taken at face value here, he was a member of the Sanhedrin and thus had to be married to be a member and cast a vote. Therefore he was married at the time he was persecuting the church, and unmarried some time after he became a believer. This difference was no doubt due to his family, friends and fellow Jews in Tarsus disavowing any association or relationship with him, viewing Saul as "dead" because of his turning, in their minds, against Judaism²¹.

When Paul wrote to the church at Philippi some years later, he noted twice in 3:8 that he had lost "everything". There is little doubt he may well be thinking of his family and friends as well. In passing Tarsus he might have stopped on the bridge over the river and gazed at his home town with melancholy, and perhaps tears.

²⁰ See comment on 23:16. Perhaps there is evidence that Paul was able to influence his sister and that she came to the Lord.

²¹ To be a member of the Sanhedrin one was required to be married according to: Robertson's Word Pictures In The New Testament, Harper and Bros., 1931, Volume III. Following this tradition, even Paul noted the importance of marriage as a qualification for church leadership (I Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:6). Also, concerning Paul's family, see comment on 4:1 and 9:1.

Chapter Sixteen

16:1-5

1: Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. And a disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek, 2: and he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium. 3: Paul wanted this man to go with him; and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. 4: Now while they were passing through the cities, they were delivering the decrees which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem, for them to observe. 5: So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily.

1: The year is 50-51 A.D. While traveling and ministering to the little “house churches” on the way to Galatia, and relating the events of the Jerusalem council along with the decrees sent there-from, it was in Lystra that Paul came into close contact with Timothy and his family. Timothy was young, probably in his mid-twenties to thirty years of age. Paul, in writing I Timothy, calls him a “young man” in 4:12. This means Timothy was likely under forty at the time of this letter, and since some twelve to fifteen years had passed since this first meeting in Lystra and the writing of I Timothy, we can hazard a rough guess at Timothy’s age when Paul first met him. This account, and the later letters to Timothy, attest to his mother and grandmother’s faith, but are silent regarding his father. II Timothy 1:5 speaks of the faith of his mother Eunice and of his grandmother Lois. I Timothy 3:15 suggests that Timothy, as a child, was taught in the Scriptures by these two ladies. With no mention of his father at all, this suggests that his father (a Gentile) may not have been a believer. The contrast in verse one, mentioning Timothy’s mother being a believer but no mention of his father being a believer, adds to this conclusion. We have a mixed Jewish/Gentile marriage, not uncommon among those living in this province.

2: Somehow, since Paul’s first missionary journey, Timothy had blossomed as a believer and impressed fellow believers in both Lystra and Iconium, some twenty miles away. Remember it was in Lystra that Paul had been so viciously attacked, stoned and left for dead. After traveling to Derbe and returning to Lystra, the Lord, through Paul and Barnabas’ suffering, testimony, and perseverance, must have impacted the life of this young man. Verse 3 suggests that Timothy’s father was well known in the province, probably due to his business, demanding traveling throughout the area.

3: It appears that Timothy had such a respect for Paul that he might have subtly implied a desire to go with Paul and Silas. It seems that immediately Paul and Timothy began to have a “father-son” relationship as Paul affectionately calls Timothy his “true child” in I Timothy 1:1, and “son” in 1:18. Paul uses the term “beloved son” in II Timothy 1:2 and “son” in 2:1 of the same book, as well as “beloved and faithful child” in I Corinthians 4:17. Timothy became one of Paul’s constant companions and workers throughout the rest of Paul’s life. All this suggests that perhaps Timothy’s own father may have rejected him and Paul came to fill that role for Timothy. Perhaps animosity between Timothy and his father was one motivating factor in Timothy’s willing departure from Lystra.

Paul’s desire was to avoid causing any disruption to his message among Jews he would encounter on the rest of the journey. Thus, in deciding to take Timothy along, Paul circumcised him to

preclude any problems they might encounter, since Timothy's father, a Greek, was well known in the province.

4-5: The travel of Paul, Silas, Timothy and perhaps some other companions (possibly Titus)²² throughout the region was uneventful as far as opposition was concerned. As they reached each city, their ministry was the same. They reported on what had transpired since their last visit and read the letter sent by the Jerusalem council. Of course they taught and encouraged the brethren. They also dealt with differences, disagreements and conflicts between Jewish and Gentile believers so understanding and harmony was reached. Over all, the believers were strengthened while the number of believers grew. This was not a rushed trip. Since leaving Antioch, one can estimate a period of a few months having transpired by the time they reach Mysia (verse seven).

16:6-10

6: They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; 7: and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them; 8: and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. 9: A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." 10: When he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

6: Their journey from the regions around Tarsus led them Northwest. As they passed through Antioch, they stopped, wondered and prayed about where to go from there. The next stop would either be Perga or new territory. Perga was a dead end because Barnabas and Mark were already covering the next stop after that, Cyprus. Ahead of them lay either Asia Minor, or the northwest territory, the gateway to Macedonia and Greece to the west as well as Bithynia to the east. It was a momentous time for the little band. If they struck out for either Asia or the northwest, a journey of several hundred miles lay before them.

As they contemplated and prayed, the Holy Spirit forbade them from traveling to Asia, which would include Ephesus and nearby cities. In fact, churches had sprung up in many of these cities by the work of others. Paul had not been involved. The forbidding word of the Spirit likely came through one who was endowed with this "gift of grace"²³, or a "prophet". This could have easily been Silas himself, noted as a prophet in 15:32.

7-8: So they traveled some 300 miles to the edge of the province of Mysia, a crossroads in the trade route.²⁴ There, they decided to go north to Bithynia and made plans and preparations to do so. In fact, the Greek suggests that they actually had begun the journey when the "Spirit of Jesus" halted their progress. At that point, they altered their route, and, "passing by" Mysia (not stopping; i.e. neglecting or ignoring the province) they came to Troas. Troas was near the site of ancient Grecian city of Troy, but was now a Roman colony, military outpost, the major seaport of Mysia and an important city of commerce at a major trade route intersection between east and west. Once again,

²² Titus was definitely with Paul in Ephesus during Paul's third journey. Whether he accompanied Paul on this journey or not is uncertain.

²³ See, "A Brief Word Study Concerning The Gifts Of The Holy Spirit" by this author.

²⁴ Land travel in these days consisted of one or more of the following means: Walking, donkeys, horses (expensive and essentially but not exclusively for military use), camels (unusual as a common conveyance), and carriages. We are not told what means Paul used, but for long journeys, any one or a combination of means could have been employed. See footnote 18 in chapter 18 for travel by ship.

after stopping there, they found themselves in a dilemma. To the east, along the Dardanelles and the Sea of Marmara and onto the shores of the Black Sea, were many Jewish settlements within the Roman cities there, but Paul, Silas and their companions had been prohibited from ministering in that region. Years later, the epistle of James and especially those of Peter would be directed to this area. To the west lay Macedonia and Greece, Italy and Rome and the heart of the empire. Troas itself would be a great place to begin the work. It was a huge city, covering several square miles. The agora and surrounding city center to the harbor covered some 1000 acres.

So they began to settle in. While there, two things seemed to have happened. First, they either began the work before the vision occurred (verse 9) or met with believers already there and fellowshipped with them. This is evident as II Corinthians 2:12 implies Paul's intent, and Acts 20:5-11 tells of Paul's lengthy message to the church in that city on his third journey some three years later. Also, II Timothy 4:13 speaks of a cache of "books and parchments" Paul has at the house of Carpas in Troas he wants Timothy to bring with him when he visits Paul in the Roman prison. So Troas became some sort of a center of operations for Paul.

Second, Paul came into close friendship with Luke, a Gentile physician in Troas. Luke, also a friend or associate of the noted "Theophilus", for whom he is preparing this second account, makes the decision to accompany Paul on his journey. Theophilus may well have been a patient of Luke, but was at least Luke's patron as it seems he commissioned Luke to keep a diary of the events, as well as find out more about the truth of Jesus' life, ministry, death, resurrection, etc. (See: Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1). Luke was most likely a resident of Troas, and though some think he may have resided at Philippi, this is unacceptable, as later in Philippi, all (including Luke) accepted Lydia's invitation to stay in her house.

Paul's meeting Luke was no accident. It seems indisputable that The Lord directed Paul and his companions to Troas for this purpose, among others of course. Whether Paul met Luke at a meeting of believers or sought him out due to medical needs we don't know. We do know that before Paul and his companions left Troas, Luke was with him, a believer, and committed to Paul's well being as well as to recording an account of the things mentioned above. Luke uses the words "The Spirit of Jesus" (not, 'The Spirit of Christ') when describing the circumstances prohibiting Paul and his companions from going on to Bithynia. This suggests that there is compassion, a caring for Paul that Jesus was providing. It is a soft and personal way of directing Paul. The "Spirit of Jesus" is the "Spirit of help, rescue, saving grace and salvation" as we translate the phrase and word "Jesus". Luke uses this phrase only once, and it is here. In fact, this is the only use of this phrase in the New Testament with the exception of Paul's similar use in Philippians 1:19 where it conveys a similar idea.

9: A "vision". (See comment on 10:3) This man must have appeared in close proximity to Paul as it would be impossible to see across the Aegean to Macedonia from Troas. "A man of Macedonia" - obvious from the plea for "help". This man was probably a Greek Gentile in indigenous garb. "Come over to Macedonia and help us". No longer a prohibition, Paul now gets an affirmative. "It was the cry of Europe for Christ"²⁵ Macedonia is the land of Alexander the Great and of his father, King Phillip of Macedon. "Help us" - Greek "Βοηθεω" ("bow-ey-theh-o"), "aid": or "assistance".

10: A revealing passage affirming the passage of time in Troas. First, the textual pronouns describing Paul and his companions changes from "they" to "we" clearly indicating that Luke had

²⁵ Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, Bible Commentary

now joined the mission at Troas. The “we” passages throughout Acts are indicative of Luke’s presence at the time of the event. When they are absent, Luke’s narrative is written from other eyewitness or reliable accounts.

“...immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.” It is clear Paul gathered his group confidants around him and told them of the vision. So there was discussion about it and it was concluded by all to go to Macedonia. Note Luke’s statement, “God had called us ...”. There is no question that Luke had become a part of Paul’s mission during the sojourn in Troas. This no doubt took some time, although Luke does not mention it directly. One can easily imagine that, as the relationship of Paul and Luke deepened in Troas that Luke shared this with Theophilus and together, with Paul, came to a commitment regarding Luke’s accompaniment with Paul. No doubt Luke shared the goal to document everything about Jesus as well as the spread of the His gospel. How Luke, Theophilus and Paul saw the momentous importance of this work for future generations of believers is mind-boggling. It may have been partly due to the growing influence of Gnosticism and Judaism that further prompted this mission because we know that Theophilus had received many conflicting, even fanciful stories about Jesus (See note on verses 7-8 of this chapter, “second...”)

16:11-12

16:11: “So putting out to sea from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and on the day following to Neapolis; 12: and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia, a *Roman* colony; and we were staying in this city for some days.”

11: Samothrace is an island midway between Troas and the Philippian seaport at Neapolis. The journey could take anywhere from two to five days depending on the weather, especially the wind and the constant current running strongly from northwest to southeast in that part of the Aegean. This particular trip was a two-day journey by ship, and over a hundred miles, so they stayed the night on Samothrace. “We ran a straight course...” indicates they had favorable wind. Otherwise it could take several extra days to buck the current and the wind.. Further, they did not cross directly to Neapolis but hugged the interior coastline as much as possible to avoid unpredictable weather conditions. This was a typical sailing procedure. In Acts 20:6, it took them five days to make the return trip, obviously bucking the same wind that helped them on this journey.

12: From Neapolis, they would have ascended on a paved Roman road to Philippi, some ten miles distant. The road, paved with stones, is still in use today. The city was named after the father of Alexander the Great - Phillip II of Macedon. It was a Roman colony and the leading city of the first district of Macedonia. Philippi became the home of many retired Roman legionnaires. There were few Jews there and no synagogue. The Jews that did inhabit the city were “Hellenized”, considered themselves Romans, and may have even worn Roman garb.

tumult over the “Chrestus” cult.^{26 27} So the predominantly Gentile – Roman officials (military – “strategos” often translated as “Praetor”) and the crowd were immediately prejudiced against Paul and Silas from the start. This explains why Luke and Timothy were not arrested. They were Gentiles.²⁸

²⁶ This situation and edict are recorded in Suetonius’ “Lives of the Caesars”, 25; and in Dio Cassius LX, 6.

²⁷ See also Acts 18:2 where this same edict is mentioned.

The charge is hypocritical as the actual event, robbing these men of profit, is not mentioned. The “proclaimed customs” they are complaining about must be that Paul and Silas are, in their perception, introducing a new religion. Judaism was a legitimate religion approved by Rome but Christianity was not. The introduction of “new gods” was prohibited without Roman approval.

The already growing animosity toward Jews along with this accusation 16:13-15

13: And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled. 14: A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul. 15: And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.

13: After arriving in Philippi, the missionary band had no place to stay. So they may have simply found a place in the city to room. The condition in these places was known to be deplorable.²⁹ They awaited the Sabbath day and then traveled about a mile west from the Agoura to the River Gangites, to a place where they found women of the small Jewish population meeting for prayer. At the edge of the city was a Roman arch or gate that still stands today through which the men probably passed on the way to the “place of prayer”. When they came among them, the missionaries, after introductions and so forth, sat down and spoke the gospel to them. This would have been a real blessing for the women to have such learned men and world travelers spend several hours with them.

14: Lydia was from Thyatira in Asia Minor (In the province of “Lydia”) and a “God-fearer”. This means she was a Gentile believer in the God of the Jews and appreciated their history and the scriptures, but did not become a proselyte. She was in the business of selling purple fabrics. There was quite a demand for this fine fabric, often used for the garments of royal personages, and on the togas of Roman citizens. In Thyatira there was a probably a Jewish segment of the population there that was in the dyeing industry. She had come to believe in God much the way Cornelius had or any other “God-Fearer” and this may have occurred in Thyatira while she was working in the industry there. Now at Philippi, she was a merchant and likely had a spot in the Agoura from which she sold her goods. The Lord opened her heart to believe what the missionaries were teaching and she was saved. Among the other women there may have been Euodia and Syntyche (Philippians 4:2). Men became involved shortly thereafter as well. Note Philippians 4:2, “Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in *the cause of* the gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.” Lydia is sometimes called “The first convert in Europe”, but this is in error as there were already many established Christian congregations throughout the western empire.

15: Lydia and “her household” were baptized. There is no indication whom this included. But

²⁸ This decree was reversed by Claudius prior to his death in 54, due to his friendship with and the influence of Herod Agrippa II. Also see Josephus, “Antiquities of the Jews”, Book XX, chapter 1. Romans 16:3 show Priscilla and Aquila once again in Rome.

²⁹ “Word Pictures In The New Testament”, Volume II, A.T. Robertson, Harper and Brothers, 1931.

this baptism took place in the very cold waters of the Gangites near the place of prayer. After the baptisms, Lydia invited the missionary troop to stay at her house. This evidences some wealth, as she was able to give shelter to several guests. There was reluctance on the part of Paul and his companions to do so, because she had to “urge” or “compel” them to stay and used the words, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord,”... (simply indicating she was a believer, obedient to the word, and had followed the Lord in baptism). To refuse her invitation was tantamount to saying she was not faithful. She was a fine salesperson indeed! So they all accepted, including Luke, (“she prevailed upon us”) evidencing he had no residence in Philippi. The financial resources of the little party were limited, and Lydia’s generous offer saved them quite a bit as they not only had spent several months getting to Philippi but remained in Philippi for a lengthy stay. It could be that Paul found work as a tentmaker to supplement the revenue and others, like Luke, had skills to help as well. (See: Acts 18:3; 20:34; I Corinthians 4:12, 9:6; I Thessalonians 2:9; II Thessalonians 3:7-9)

16:16-24

16: It happened that as we were going to the place of prayer, a slave-girl having a spirit of divination met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortune-telling. 17: Following after Paul and us, she kept crying out, saying, "These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation." 18: She continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" And it came out at that very moment. 19: But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the authorities, 20: and when they had brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, "These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews, 21: and are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans." 22: The crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order *them* to be beaten with rods. 23: When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely; 24: and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

16: “It happened that” – again pointing to an extended stay in the city. “a slave-girl” - indicating a young woman or “damsel” who was held in slavery by “owners” (probably more than two). This subjected her to any number of abuses including sexual abuses. “having” – literally, “possessed by”, “a spirit of divination”, in contrast to the “Holy Spirit”, a spirit called “Πυθων” or “Python” in the text. Luke uses this term (only here in the Bible) to describe this “spirit”. “Python” was the name given to the serpent that guarded the Oracle at Delphi, and, in mythology, was slain by Apollo (the next most powerful god next to his father Zeus and the averter of evil, presiding over religious law and the spokesman for the will and word of Zeus). The prophetess at Delphi was called “Pythia”. These possessed women spoke for the “spirit” of Apollo through an interpreter. (These “spirits” are always seen as demonic in the scriptures) From this image, the word Python also came to define a ventriloquist. She foretold the fortunes or calamities of those inquirers seeking guidance for the future. There was a considerable charge for this service.

Thus she, “was bringing her masters much profit by fortune-telling.” Delphi itself had fallen to ruins centuries before, but the practice of this cult continued. This “service” was quite popular in Philippi, and was a business, which several men ran. The slave girl herself did not attain wealth or prestige as did the oracles and temple prostitutes in Greece.

17-18: This girl began to follow Paul and his company around (no doubt at the bequest of her “owners” as an advertising ploy) and shout and shriek out her announcement. The use of the term “Most High God” is also found in the mouths of demons in Mark 5:7 and Luke 8:28. “The way of salvation” is literally “a way of salvation”, as no definite article is used. Further, the term “Most High God” implies a pantheon of other gods, of which Zeus is the chief. The demon, however, knew the truth, that it was “Yahweh” whom Paul was representing.

Paul allowed this to continue for quite some time without interference. No doubt much thought, prayer and discussion transpired as to what to do about this. The days passed. It was a complex situation. The main concern was the welfare of the young woman. This depended on how this was handled. After a while, Luke notes that Paul became “διαπονεω” (“dia-po-neo”) translated “greatly annoyed” in the NASB, “grieved” in the KJV, and “troubled” in the NIV - showing the difficulty of an accurate translation. The root words give the sense that the activity of the young woman caused an emotional “working” “or “disturbance” in Paul resulting in his feeling a sorrow for the young woman while at the same time desiring to have the shouting stop. Her actions were not causing any specific difficulty in the ministry there, but her testimony was troubling because of its demonic source. It also proclaimed “a” way of salvation as if what Paul was preaching was one option among many, and God the “Most high” of many.

Very possibly Paul and the others had been thinking about how best to deal with this situation without causing the girl to come to harm at the hands of those who “owned” her. Considering various consequences of actions that could be taken, and weighing the damage already occurring in the woman’s life, not only by the demon, but possibly at the hands of her captors, Paul opted to place any repercussions that might occur upon himself and his friends rather than see her in torment any longer.

So he “turned” (that is he stopped and either turned around or walked back to where she was, i.e. “reversed his direction”) and addressed the spirit, commanding it to depart in the name of (authority of) Jesus Christ. The spirit departed instantly (“that very moment” is literally “that very hour”, but the context indicates “immediately”, or “without delay”).

19: Their “profit” (business) was gone. This was not an unexpected consequence. Paul and Silas were brought (forcibly and physically taken) to the “Bema” in the Agoura. This place of public judicial activity on the north side of the forum still exists today in the Agoura of Philippi, albeit in a state of ruin. The “we” and “us” passages end here and Luke does not accompany Paul and the rest when they leave Philippi (17:1)

20-22: The year is c. 51 A.D. at this time. The reason this is mentioned is because of the content of these verses. The accusation includes a reference to Paul and Silas being Jews. "These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews, and are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans." This is a direct reflection of the edict of Claudius in 49-50 that expelled Jews from Rome if they refused to comply with the Emperor’s edict that attempted to unify Rome after the disastrous rule of Caligula. His edict required, among many things, that all Roman citizens dress uniformly in Roman style clothing, which many Jews (and many Jewish-Christians) refused to do. According to Suetonius, Jews were already unpopular in Rome due to did not even allow time for a defense.

The crowd was inflamed against Paul and Silas to the extent that a ruling was handed

down immediately just to gain order. The outer garments of Paul and Silas were torn off, leaving them clothed with only their “loincloths” or “underwear”. This was humiliating. They both were beaten severely with rods. The “rod” was a peeled branch or stick from a tree. There were, apparently, several men beating Paul and Silas, each likely receiving dozens of very painful wounds. There was no “legal” limit to the number of these blows in Roman law, but Jewish custom was forty. It is not clear if the Roman magistrates cared about infuriating the Jewish citizens in the city. Their punishment of Paul (and possibly Silas) was completely illegal since Paul was a Roman citizen. But no opportunity was afforded for a defense to be presented, and Paul did not even shout out that he was a Roman citizen. This may have been to continue protection of the young lady as the attention of everyone in the city was directed toward Paul and Silas. Only later when the “dust had settled” did Paul bring up his citizenship.

23-24: After a brutal beating, Paul and Silas were cast into a nearby “jail” or general confinement area adjacent to the Agoura. Their wounds were left unattended and their outer garments were replaced on them. The jailer, (“keeper of the bonds” as the Greek is understood) was most likely a ranked Roman soldier, perhaps one of the many retired legionnaires that lived in Philippi. He was told to “guard them securely”. Being the sole “jailer” and having no assistants, he took them into an inner chamber of the jail, (or “dungeon”) and fastened their feet in “stocks”. This way he could avoid the unpleasant responsibility of staying awake all night. The “stocks” [Greek – “ζυλον” (zool-awn)] were wooden planks split (lengthwise) with five holes large enough to contain neck, wrists and ankles when closed and locked. The ankle holes were furthest out, then the hand holes within the feet holes and then the neck hole. The jailer had the choice as to what limbs to place in the stocks. In the case of Paul and Silas, he mercifully only placed their feet in the stocks and chained their wrists to the wall. Nevertheless the feet, spread apart, caused great discomfort and perhaps even considerable pain. There were two doors to close, one for the inner dungeon and an outer door. They were not alone in this jail (verse 25).

16:25-34

25: But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them; 26: and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened. 27: When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. 28: But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!" 29: And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, 30: and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" 31: They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." 32: And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house. 33: And he took them that *very* hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his *household*. 34: And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.

25: In this day, prayers were often chanted in a melodious fashion, as in the synagogue. The language is not mentioned, but their fellow prisoners were able to understand the words, and were listening intently, so it is possible they were singing in Greek. This would be unusual for the two Jews, but perhaps it was deliberate for the sake of the others, or perhaps the Holy Spirit was once again at work in the ministry of tongues and interpretations. It is likely that Paul and Silas were singing some passages from the Psalms as well as including their own prayers. The word for

“hymns of praise” is “ὕμνεω” (“hoom-neh-o”) from which we get our word “hymn” and “hum”. Psalms 113-118 were the great “Hallel” and a traditional song of the Jews along with Psalm 100 and others. The “Hallel” may well have been the song sung by Jesus and His disciples at “the last supper”.

26: The idea here is that the earthquake was so forceful as to loose the doors and allow the chains of the prisoners to fall from the walls. We are not told whether or not the stocks were also loosened. It was possible however, once the hands were free, to pry or break the stocks loose

27: The earthquake awakened the jailer, who dressed rapidly, secured his weapon and lit a lamp. He then rushed to find out if the jail was still secure. He may have lived adjacent to or very near the jail. It appears that others, probably household servants, came with him. Since it was midnight, it was difficult to see, even with an oil lamp. Upon approaching the jail and seeing both the outer door and then the inner door also open, he concluded that the prisoners had escaped. He became terrified for his life, knowing he faced severe flogging and execution. So he drew his sword, prepared to kill himself. His act of suicide would relieve his family of both shame and distress. Did the act of suicide also preserve his family’s income where a trial and execution would not?

28: The jailer’s desperate plan was overheard by Paul and the rest, suggesting that there were others with the jailer to whom he was speaking regarding the consequences of the event and his decision. Luke notes that not only Paul and Silas remained in the jail, but the other prisoners also. Once they all were free of constrictions, escape was imminent, but while the jailer was getting prepared to rush to the jail, God, through the imploring of Paul and Silas had done a work in the hearts and minds of the others imprisoned with them. The prisoners were all well aware the fate awaiting the jailer and his family. They were all still in the dungeon.

29: “He called for lights”. To whom? Again, it was likely household servants who brought lights or “torches of fire”. When the torches came, he “rushed in” and could see clearly that all the prisoners were still there. He came to Paul and Silas and fell at their feet, and the Greek calls his describes him as “ἐντρομος” (“en-tro-mos”), literally physically shaking and quaking with fear. This resulted from the crushing blow, realizing how close he had come to death and from the incredible miracle he then witnessed. He was deeply moved in any case, as he did not seek to re-confine them. Kneeling or laying prostrate at the feet of Paul and Silas, and perhaps weeping, he was comforted. As they all then sat or stood together in the prison (Paul and Silas would never allow an attitude of worship toward themselves) the jailer was probably told by the two about why they had all stayed in the prison. They assured him they would not attempt an escape at all.

30: After Paul and Silas spent some time with the jailer, he brought them out and simply asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” The jailer either would not have asked this specific a question unless he either had been briefed in the jail after the quake, or had heard of the message Paul and the rest had been proclaiming these past several weeks. We saw (in verse 17) that the community was aware of their message. The address “sirs” is a title of high respect and regard, indicating that he was at their mercy as well as at their service. Again, Paul and Silas would have not accepted subservience or taken advantage of this man, even though he owed them his life. What of the other prisoners at this point? Either they went with the group and participated in the events of the rest of the night (of which there is no direct mention of them) or they stayed in the jail and slept the night away, either voluntarily or re-confined. They are not mentioned again in the narrative.

31: This simple and much quoted statement says it all. It is much the same statement Peter made to Cornelius (10:43). “saved” is “σωζω” (“sowd-zo”). It includes the idea of, “being rescued and

made whole”. “Household” would include family and servants.

32-33: From the beginning of scripture, they no doubt briefly shared all God had done in Christ in their lives as well as what God had done for all peoples including him. It was not a lengthy sermon but covered the essentials. Paul and Silas were weak from hunger, thirst, and from the severe beating they had endured. Yet sharing their message took precedent over their own needs. Their wounds had not even been tended to. Finally, the jailer took them out of his dwelling (to the river in all probability) and washed their wounds. While there, the jailer and his entire household were baptized, indicating that somewhere during the presentation of the gospel to all of them, they had come to faith and confessed Jesus as their Savior and Lord. It was still night, so the event was still lit by torches.

34: The Greek indicates he “brought them up” to his house further suggesting they had been “down” at the river at the “place of prayer”. A table was set and food served. The jailer and everyone there were moved to rejoicing because his new faith effected a miraculous change in him and in his household. This rejoicing is typical of those who first believe in Christ and recognize the miracle that happens within them. (Note: Luke 10:20; 15:5; 15:10; Acts 8:87; 8:39; and 11:23 for example) After this time of rejoicing and strengthening, all the prisoners returned to the jail. Morning was drawing near.

16:35-40

35: Now when day came, the chief magistrates sent their policemen, saying, "Release those men." 36: And the jailer reported these words to Paul, *saying*, "The chief magistrates have sent to release you. Therefore come out now and go in peace." 37: But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us in public without trial, men who are Romans, and have thrown us into prison; and now are they sending us away secretly? No indeed! But let them come themselves and bring us out." 38: The policemen reported these words to the chief magistrates. They were afraid when they heard that they were Romans, 39: and they came and appealed to them, and when they had brought them out, they kept begging them to leave the city. 40: They went out of the prison and entered *the house of* Lydia, and when they saw the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.

35-36: “policemen” – literally “keepers of the rods” - actually those who were employed to beat others with rods. Why this decree by the military officials? Later church tradition, as written in the Codex Bezae, says that the magistrates “assembled together in the market place and, recollecting The earthquake that had happened, were afraid.” But this is a fifth to sixth century document and this statement is not found in earlier manuscripts. The actual reason can only be conjectured.

37: “Them”. The “keepers of the rods” accompanied the jailer to the prison and heard the words of Paul and Silas. What was Paul’s motive in announcing his Roman citizenship and requiring this action of the magistrates? Could it have been so they would be allowed freedom to continue unhindered in the city?

38: One thing is clear, the heat is now cast back upon the accusers and the magistrates. They had

broken the law and had been influenced by a hostile crowd.³⁰

39: There was quite a discussion and a “deal” was struck. Paul and Silas would leave the city if...what? A good guess would be that the new believers (or “new religion”) would be respected and the slave girl allowed freedom from her previous owners without repercussion.

40: There is quite an assembly. Philippi now had a church that met at Lydia’s and had considerable numbers. Adding the women from Lydia’s acquaintance, their contacts, the jailer’s family and household, along with any others that may have come to believe, it is possible that up to twenty or more souls had come into the kingdom. They were “encouraged” by Paul and Silas. This word is “παράκελεω”, (“para-ka-leh-oh”) the word commonly used to describe what the church did when it came together. It is a rich word, and also used of the “Paraclete” or Holy Spirit. The word means “to call near” or “alongside”. It carries the understanding of “support”, “encouragement”, “exhortation” (pep-talk), to “give courage” and so on. The idea is to assure others they are never alone, but the very presence of God and his saints is there with them in whatever they do. It also suggests maintaining “perseverance” and “steadfastness” in their walk.

“They departed”. Paul, Silas but not Luke and possibly not Timothy at this time. The “we” and “us” pronouns disappear for a time. Luke remained behind for a while, probably to stabilize the work at Philippi until leaders could emerge. He apparently remained there until the third missionary journey when Paul and his company met him at Philippi as revealed in Acts 20:2-6. Timothy seems to have also remained behind for a time as he is not mentioned until the work at Berea.

It was Paul’s custom, according to the request of James, that Paul, in his travels, “remember the poor” in Jerusalem. So Paul regularly asked his new brothers and sisters in Christ to contribute to this need. Many did and Paul mentions it frequently in his letters. Timothy likely remained behind to help not only strengthen the fledging church there, but gather whatever support he could for the poor at Jerusalem.

Chapter Seventeen

17:1-4

1: Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. 2: And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, 3: explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and *saying*, "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ." 4: And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women.

1: Amphipolis was on the Via Egnatia some thirty-five miles southwest of Philippi on the Strymon River at the head of a gulf of the same name on the northern coast of the Aegean Sea. It was a one-day trip by horseback and they likely stayed the night there. Apollonia was thirty-three miles along the same road, another one-day trip. Thessalonica was their destination, another thirty-three miles

³⁰ The *Lex Valeria* b.c. 509 and the *Lex Poecia* b.c. 248 made it a crime to inflict blows on a Roman citizen. Cicero says, “To fetter a Roman citizen was a crime, to scourge him a scandal, to slay him--parricide.” Claudius had “deprived the city of Rhodes of its freedom for having crucified some citizen of Rome”

or so. It was the capital city of the district, the most populous (around 70,000), and had the largest seaport on the North Aegean - Neapolis being the other. It was the busiest city of the Aegean and the crossroads of several major Roman thoroughfares including the Egnatian Way from Italy and the Roman road to Athens. Thessalonica was originally called Therma but renamed Thessaloniki by Cassander for his wife, the sister of Alexander the Great. Here, the Via Egnatia turned Northwest.

Today, there are only limited archaeological digs as the city has always been inhabited and they continually built over the ancient sites. There was a synagogue in the city and Paul and Silas directed their steps there.

2-3: For three successive Sabbaths Paul spoke with the people there about the scriptures and how the Messiah had come to them in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. It was quite an effort and a patient exposition. The main thrust of his argument dealt with the toughest theme, how the Messiah had to suffer, die, be buried and then rise again on the third day. Then he had to identify Jesus with the Messianic portrait he had painted and convince them from the Scriptures that this was God's plan from the beginning. Not easy. But Paul was an accomplished scholar and Rabbi. Many were convinced. This time designation does not represent the entire stay of Paul and Silas at Thessalonica. They were probably there for several weeks, if not several months. After three Sabbaths in the synagogue, Paul taught from another location.

4: The synagogue in Thessalonica was large and well attended by Jews, proselytes and God-fearing Greeks. Paul's message persuaded some Jews, a "large" number of the "God-fearing" Greek men and a number of leading women to join, or literally, "cast their lot" with Paul and Silas. Identifying whom the "leading women" were is difficult. The word "leading" is the simple word "first". In verse 12, the word "prominent" is similar to the idea "well thought of". These women were either prominent in the synagogue or in the community, perhaps even wives of city leaders. See the note at 10:50. They were members of the synagogue at Thessalonica, likely Gentile proselytes (having adopted the Jewish faith in its entirety) and probably had high community standing as well as standing among the women in the synagogue. One of the members of the synagogue named Jason gave Paul and Silas a place to stay. Timothy's activity is not mentioned by Luke at this time and leaves some question as to what he was doing and where. Speculating, it can be easily concluded that Timothy arrived at Thessalonica during this ministry and brought gifts of support along with him from the new "church" at Philippi. (See: "Excursus" on following page)

17:5-10

5: But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and attacking the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people. 6: When they did not find them, they *began* dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have upset the world have come here also; 7: and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus." 8: They stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things. 9: And when they had received a pledge from Jason and the others, they released them. 10: The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.

5: "Becoming jealous" – Because a large number of the people of the synagogue were attending to the teaching of Paul and Silas, the Jews became determined to put a stop to it. The word "jealous"

is from the Greek for “zealot” or to have zeal³¹. “Wicked” men from the market place were employed to form a “mob”. The Greek word interpreted “wicked” is the word for “degenerate sinners” meaning these men were not a part of the believing community, either Jew or Christian but were men of questionable morality. Likely they are part of the mercantile contingency who had been negatively affected by the loss of sales of goods associated with the pagan gods and goddesses (a common occurrence, see: Acts 19:23-28). This “Jason” may be the same “Jason” mentioned in Paul’s letter to the church at Rome, (16:21) where he describes him as a “kinsman” meaning a blood relative. At the least, Jason was a fellow countryman of Paul’s. This may be one reason Paul set out to Thessalonica from Philippi. In any case, the mob attacked Jason’s house and attempted to grab Paul and Silas. But they weren’t there no doubt being pre-warned and not wishing to experience the opening of fresh wounds.

6-8: The mob, not finding Paul and Silas, forcibly (much in the same manner as happened in Philippi) brought Jason and some of the new believing men to the “πολιταρχης” (“pol-i-tar-case”) meaning “city magistrates”. We get our word “politician” from this word. This office is memorialized in an ancient inscription in Thessalonica on a remaining arch dating back to these times. These were likely Roman officials. The accusation by the mob was similar to that charged against Paul and Silas in Philippi and did not reflect that the synagogue was losing members and revenue. Instead they invoked the “Edict of Claudius” regarding approved religions by the empire and added a distortion regarding the exaltation of another king besides Caesar...as if they cared. Note that the report of the effect of Paul and Silas’ work had already reached their ears. “World” is “oikomene” or “habitation” indicating the Roman Empire.

9-10: A discussion ensued resulting in another “deal”. In exchange for getting Paul and Silas out of town, Jason and the new believers would be left alone, and their new “religion” recognized as legitimate in Thessalonica. Jason and the others so promised. The word “pledge” can also refer to a fine or bail, but that wasn’t what the Jews wanted. Immediately they sent Paul and Silas away by night. They traveled 50 miles Southwest to Berea.

EXCURSUS – THE FULLER MINISTRY AT THESSALONICA

The letters of I and II Thessalonians and other texts referencing this ministry in Thessalonica give us a fuller picture of all that transpired during the months Paul and Silas were in the city and describe what happened thereafter. In summary we know these things:³²

1: The church at Philippi sent Paul financial support as well as an offering for the poor at Jerusalem. Paul, in accordance with the request of James, faithfully gathered funds for this purpose when he met with believers. This support could have come by the hand of Timothy. In Paul’s letter to the church of Philippi he notes,

“You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; for even in Thessalonica you sent *a gift* more than once for my needs. (Philippians 4:15-16)

³¹ See comment on 5:17 regarding “jealousy”.

³² See this author’s commentaries on both books of Thessalonians.

This reflects the faithfulness of those in Philippi, (not known for wealth – except perhaps for Lydia) as they sent gifts and offerings more than once.

2: Paul and Silas suffered considerable harassment and persecution before being “deported”. His letters to the Thessalonians tell us the story.

(I and II Thessalonians were written over a period of a year and a half while Paul was at Corinth in the latter part of 51 into 52 A.D.. They may have been his first apostolic epistles. We know the date because an inscription at Delphi notes the proconsulship of Gallio as being during 51-52 A.D., the same Gallio who is mentioned specifically in Acts 18:12)

“...for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit,...” I Thessalonians 1:5-6

“For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain, but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition. For our exhortation does not *come* from error or impurity or by way of deceit; but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts. For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed--God is witness--nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority. But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing *mother* tenderly cares for her own children. Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us. I Thessalonians 2:1-8

3: Paul and Silas took on work while at Thessalonica to support themselves.

“For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, *how* working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses, and *so is* God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; just as you know how we *were* exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father *would* his own children,...” I Thessalonians 2:9-11

“Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we *kept* working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you; not because we do not have the right *to this*, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example. For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either. For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread. II Thessalonians 3:6-12

4: Paul's teaching covered many things including the letter from Jerusalem (Acts 15).

“Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us *instruction* as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more. For you know what commandments we gave you by *the authority of the Lord Jesus*. For this is the will of God, your sanctification; *that is*, that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; *and* that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is *the avenger* in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned *you*. For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. So, he who rejects *this* is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you. Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for *anyone* to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more,..." I Thessalonians 4:1-10

“Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?” II Thessalonians 2:1-5

“So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions (*paradosis*- “*that given over*” or “*a gift from or alongside*”) which you were taught, whether by word *of mouth* or by letter from us. II Thessalonians 2:15

5: The church in Thessalonica suffered constant harassment and persecution after Paul left.

“For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they *did* from the Jews, who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out. They are not pleasing to God, but hostile to all men, hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved; with the result that they always fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them to the utmost”. II Thessalonians 2:14-16

“We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is *only* fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows *ever* greater; therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. *This is* a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering. For after all it is *only* just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and *to give* relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that

day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed--for our testimony to you was believed. To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and *the* Lord Jesus Christ. II Thessalonians 1:1-12

6: Paul may not have ever visited the city again after being “deported”, and certainly had questions about a revisit in any case.

“But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short while--in person, not in spirit--were all the more eager with great desire to see your face. For we wanted to come to you--I, Paul, more than once--and *yet* Satan hindered us. For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are our glory and joy. Therefore when we could endure *it* no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone, and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith, so that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this. For indeed when we were with you, we *kept* telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know. For this reason, when I could endure *it* no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor would be in vain. But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you,..." I Thessalonians 2:17-20, 3:1-6

7: The church at Thessalonica either wrote one or more letters to Paul seeking his teaching on different matters or sent messages.

“Therefore when we could endure *it* no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone, and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith, so that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this. For indeed when we were with you, we *kept* telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know. For this reason, when I could endure *it* no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor would be in vain. But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you, for this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith; I Thessalonians 3:1-7

For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies.” II Thessalonians 3:11

8: Paul had difficulty writing letters, so he used an amanuensis and only signed them in his own hand.

“I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter; this is the way I write. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. II Thessalonians 3:17-18

END OF EXCURSUS

17:11-14

11: Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily *to see* whether these things were so. 12: Therefore many of them believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men. 13: But when the Jews of Thessalonica found out that the word of God had been proclaimed by Paul in Berea also, they came there as well, agitating and stirring up the crowds. 14: Then immediately the brethren sent Paul out to go as far as the sea; and Silas and Timothy remained there.

11: “noble-minded”, literally “well bred” or “nobly bred”. Used only twice more in the N.T., once by Luke in his gospel (19:12) and once by Paul in I Corinthians 1:26. Other uses of similar meaning are found in the Greek classics. Implies a higher level of intelligence and education than the Jews in Thessalonica and so the distinct contrast to the Jews in Thessalonica is noted. The reason for Luke’s comment is found in the remaining part of the verse. “Scriptures” would be of course, only Old Testament texts.

12: Based on their confirmation of what Paul and Silas had taught. “Many of them” – Jews. Prominent Greek women and men – see note at 17:4. Note the mention of “women” first in the order.

13: These Jews, likely raised the same charges as they did in Thessalonica. However, having been forcibly prevented from attacking the new body of believers in Thessalonica, they came to Berea with a view to terminating both the persons and the work of Paul and Silas.

14: “Immediately” – before any city officials came to arrest Paul and Silas wherever they were staying. Silas and Timothy bade Paul a farewell from the coast and remained behind, no doubt to encourage and establish the new church at Berea. If they took a ship, they likely launched out of Pydna, on the seacoast some twenty-five miles southeast of Berea. Taking the Roman road to Athens is possible, but it would be a journey of nearly three hundred miles. Either way, several of the “brethren” accompanied Paul to Athens. This seems obviously to assure Paul security and safety in case the Jews were so persistent they would follow and attack Paul or hire some to do so in their place. The trip by sea would take nearly as long as by ground due to the prevailing winds and currents. So an estimate of about a week would be reasonable for the trip by horseback, perhaps a day or two less by sea. If they walked, the trip was at least three weeks.

Why Athens? Several possibilities arise regarding this choice. One was that Athens was the major capital of all Greece and Macedonia, the cultural, political, religious, and commercial center. It was second in importance only to Rome itself. What better place to go to see what God might accomplish and to see how far it could spread from there. Another possibility was that the brethren felt Paul could be no safer than in Athens and this proved to be correct. Athens had no prejudicial leanings against anything new, quite the opposite. Third, apparently Paul had never visited this city and that may have attracted him. These, among other reasons to be sure, brought about the choice.

17:15-21

15: Now those who escorted Paul brought him as far as Athens; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they left. 16: Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he was observing the

city full of idols. 17: So he was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing *Gentiles*, and in the market place every day with those who happened to be present. 18: And also some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him. Some were saying, "What would this idle babbling wish to say?" Others, "He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities,"--because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. 19: And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is which you are proclaiming? 20: "For you are bringing some strange things to our ears; so we want to know what these things mean." 21: (Now all the Athenians and the strangers visiting there used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new.)

15: Safely escorting Paul to Athens and likely finding him a residence, the "brethren" were asked by Paul (once they got home to Berea) to command Silas and Timothy to come to Athens as soon as possible. Paul now anticipated persecution everywhere he went. And Paul now knew he had to stay in Athens for up to two months. Among these "brethren" may have been Aristarchus of Thessalonica, who later became one of Paul's closest friends and traveling companions (See note at 18:18).

16: One gets the feeling that Paul was trying to "stay out of trouble" while waiting for support to arrive in the persons of Silas and Timothy, but he couldn't resist getting involved publicly while alone there. His "spirit was provoked" because of all the idols in the city. Surprisingly, there was no objection or active effort to either dismiss Paul or persecute him in any way in Athens. This was a pleasant surprise for Paul but not unexpected if one knew the Athenians well. Athens was the most liberal and cosmopolitan, as well as the most Greek city, in the empire. Here, after some five hundred years of history and academic achievement, a leading university still existed in Athens and Paul had the privilege of speaking in the "student quadrangle" when he later came to the Athenian cultural and academic center (verse 21). Meanwhile, as he waited for Silas and Timothy he attended synagogue. Visitors to the congregation was invited to share news from abroad. Paul took this opportunity, as a visiting rabbi, to open the topic of the Messianic gospel.

But what of Silas and Timothy? Luke does not mention their response to Paul's "command" to rejoin him at Athens. But in I Thessalonians 3:1 through 3:8 we read,

1: Therefore when we could endure *it* no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone, 2: and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith, 3: so that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this. 4: For indeed when we were with you, we *kept* telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know. 5: For this reason, when I could endure *it* no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor would be in vain. 6: But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you, 7: for this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith; 8: for now we *really* live, if you stand firm in the Lord.

From this we know that Timothy came to Paul at Athens, but not Silas. However, Paul uses the plural pronoun "we" in his letter after Timothy had left to return to Thessalonica. Some think this to be an "editorial we", but Paul did not employ this practice anywhere else. This likely refers to a brother or two who accompanied Timothy to Athens with reports of persecution and other

challenges to the new believers at Thessalonica. Silas may well have left Timothy at Berea prior to the return of the “brethren” from Athens and gone to Thessalonica to assist.

We learn more from I and II Thessalonians, written from Corinth after Paul and Timothy left Athens. Timothy returned to Macedonia then later returned again to Paul at Corinth in the company of Silas and perhaps Aristarchus. We know this from Acts 18:5, II Corinthians 11:9 and from the salutation of both letters. “Silvanus” is another name for Silas. He may have started using that name when returning to Thessalonica in order to disguise his return there from the Jews who had sought his death months before.

I Thessalonians 1:1, “Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.”

II Thessalonians 1:1-2, “Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

17: Paul, in following his “custom” was no doubt relieved at the lack of opposition in the synagogue as well as in the market place. When Timothy finally arrived with other brothers they reported to him the difficulties among the people at Thessalonica. Then they accompanied Paul to Corinth. But Paul was concerned for the new believers at Thessalonica. Not feeling the need to keep Timothy at Corinth, Paul sent him, and someone to accompany him, back to Thessalonica and Macedonia to help the new believers there.

18: Epicureans. Founded by Epicurus around 300 B.C. For these philosophers, supreme good is happiness and pleasure, undaunted by any belief system that would bring inhibitions or prohibitions to this sought after “good”. Thus, these people were atheistic materialists and hedonists. Stoicism, founded by Zeno also around 300 B.C. embraced the ultimate virtue defined by a universal iron law of nature, the spirit of which, was the true deity. To be unmoved in conforming one’s will to this law is the perfection of virtue. This became an issue of pride and so in the two philosophies one finds pleasure and pride, both hostile to the Gospel.

This was an interesting debate to be sure. Both groups were un-accepting of each other yet both came together to take on Paul and his message, much like the Sadducees and Pharisees often did. Paul was called everything from “idle babbling” to a “proclaimer of strange deities”. “Idle babbling” is an insult and is literally “seed scatterer” or one who is casting out insignificant words fit for little more than feeding seed to birds. “Strange” can also mean “foreign” as Paul was introducing these philosophers to Jesus.

19-21: The Areopagus is the “Hill of Ares” the Greek God of war and counterpart to the Roman “Mars”. How appropriate that here Paul engages a war for the hearts, minds and souls of people. This place of debate and public discussion was located just west of the acropolis and south of the agora. It was at one time the political center of Athens and the city-state council met at the royal porch of the Areopagus to render judgments both criminally and politically. In Paul’s day it became the philosophical and religious center of Athens and the council had been reduced, under Roman rule, to be the custodians of the introductions of new religions, customs and philosophies. Paul was politely asked to explain his teachings further at the place of public gatherings for such lectures. Paul consented. It was to this very large court that Paul was led where the most interested parties

could hear these matters. This was how people – residents, business owners, students and shoppers – spent their free time.

17:22-31

22: So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects. 23: "For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.' Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you. 24: "The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; 25: nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all *people* life and breath and all things; 26: and He made from one *man* every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined *their* appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, 27: that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; 28: for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His children.' 29: "Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man. 30: "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere should repent, 31: because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

22: "Religious" is "concerned about the supernatural" from "δεισιδαιμονεστερος" ("dei-si-dai-mon-es-ter-os") literally "fearing the demons". Paul immediately gets their attention by using this word as his hearers would seek to know whether he was going to berate them or compliment them.

23: The use of this word was prompted by Paul's observance of the "altar to the unknown god". Building this altar was the way the Greeks avoided offending any god they may not have been aware of. So Paul uses this as his means to introduce Christ. "Ignorance" simply means that he is going to introduce the heretofore-unknown God to them.

24-25: Paul begins his lecture by noting that the Creator of the universe is far above any and all other gods represented by idols made by man, and is of an entirely different nature than they could conceive. Unlike the pantheism of the Greeks, and the divine "nature god" of the Stoics, Paul presents the God who created it all and is therefore above all. He is not dependent upon anything man or the creation can offer to Him.

26-27: This God of Paul is the determiner of all things, creating mankind from one and removing the idea that the universe is in control of mankind and especially that mankind is subject to the whims of thousands of powers or even of chance as the Epicureans held. "Appointed times and boundaries" indicates God's sovereignty over both when and where mankind would live and develop, with the purpose that mankind would reach out to Him and find Him. Thus the purpose for God's work is to bring mankind to Himself, and Paul's message implies the futility of serving false gods and idols as there is no possible way to have a personal relationship with them.

28: This indicates that without God's immanent presence life and breath is impossible, and in this sense, mankind are His own children. "In Him we live and move and exist" is a quote apparently from one Epimenides, a poet of Crete (c.600 B.C.). "For we also are His children" is from Aratus of Soli in Cilicia (c. 315-240) as well as Cleanthes, a Stoic philosopher (c. 320-233) who attributes "him" as Zeus. But Paul redirects it to God.

29: Paul's point is since their own philosophers note that we are the living children of God then this proves that God cannot be simply an idol, or an object of the created universe, but a living, personal being.

30: "Ignorance" is simply "not knowing". "Repent" is "to change one's mind and direction".

31: The necessity for this is, even though God has not brought judgment upon mankind in for their ignorance, is that now that He has revealed Himself and His salvation. Mankind's ignorance will no longer be "overlooked". The proof of this is in the fact of the resurrection of His "appointed man" from the dead. Paul avoids specific Jewish designations of "Messiah" (Christ) or "anointed" (using instead "appointed") because he is appealing, as God is, to all mankind. Yet any Jews in the audience would not miss his allusions to several passages of scripture. The resurrection is proof or "grounds for faith". It is through this "appointed" and "resurrected man" that God will judge the world.

17:32-34

32: Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some *began* to sneer, but others said, "We shall hear you again concerning this." 33: So Paul went out of their midst. 34: But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

32: Many Greeks believed in the existence of the "soul" after death but not in a bodily resurrection from the dead. "Sneer" is better translated "jeer" or "mock" in that Paul's argument is dismissed with a wave of the hand and an exclamation of jest or mockery. Some took this stance but others were intrigued and wished to have further discussion about these matters. God was dividing the crowd.

33-34: Paul was done with his presentation whether he wanted to be or not. So he departed the hill and some of the crowd went with him to hear more. Luke, summarizing those days, simply states that some of those who heard of this joined Paul and came to faith in Christ. It is evident from the narrative that Luke later heard this story directly from either Paul or Timothy because we have specific names of some who came to faith. Noting Dionysius as the "Areopagite" suggests that he was an official or judge of the council of twelve. A man of such influence could be a victory in the mission to Athens. The historian Eusebius notes that he later became the "bishop" or "overseer" of the church at Athens though no other evidence exists for this designation to this day. Damaris is mentioned by name because she was notable in some way, perhaps as a "prominent woman".

Although Luke gives no time frame here, one can guess that Paul's tenure at Athens was several months. Afterwards, he and Timothy set out for Corinth. Why Paul decided to visit Corinth is a mystery. Was it because he was now at a point that a trip to Rome from there was a short one and

he hoped to go there? Was it because he had had such success in Athens that going to this notably difficult and pagan city seemed less a threat? Did the Lord somehow lead him in that direction?

Regarding his tenure at Athens, we are left with little information. The city is never mentioned again (except in I Thessalonians to which we have already referred) and no letter has been found written to a church there. In fact, other than Eusebius' notation, there is no mention of a church at Athens either in the New Testament or in other Christian literature. Perhaps, other than a few believers, a growing church never developed.

Some commentators describe Paul's work there as a "failure" because he relied on the "wisdom of men" rather than on God's word. This is an unsubstantiated position for after his lecture, Paul spoke with others and they came to believe. Thus he had to teach the Word of God to them. Luke records the heart of Paul's message, not because it was a flop, but because it was a brilliant approach. Still, the work at Athens did not seem to generate the development one saw in the other cities where the team proclaimed the gospel.

When writing to the church of Corinth six months after his ministry there, Paul makes note of his approach and theme, different than that at Athens perhaps. Of course, when he spoke to the people at Corinth, he went to the synagogue not to the market place. Note his words:

"And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God. Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God predestined before the ages to our glory; *the wisdom* which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory..." I Corinthians 2:1-8

Chapter Eighteen

18:1

1: After these things he left Athens and went to Corinth.

1: "After these things" indicates, once again, elapsed time while Paul was in Athens. It is possibly the autumn of 51 A.D. when Paul travels the 50 miles west to Corinth. We don't know if he went by land or by sea. Corinth was the provincial capital and a Roman colony. It was also the chief commercial city in Greece, very cosmopolitan, and a melting pot of people from all over the world. Ships from Italy and Europe would sail into the Corinthian gulf and then be dragged across the Isthmus of Corinth on logs by horses and mules and then be deposited into the Aegean. This saved over 500 miles of distance and frequent rough seas. It was then a mere forty miles to Athens. Timothy, during this time, returned to Macedonia (I Thessalonians 3:1-5). Returning a few months later he brought Silas and probably brought Aristarchus with him.

The Corinthian Acropolis (Acrocorinth) stood on a rocky mountain over 1,800 feet above the city and hosted the temple of Aphrodite (Venus) and its thousand temple prostitutes. The mention of Corinth brought to mind every kind of immorality and debauchery. To be called a “Corinthian” did not necessarily mean one was from the city. Still, the city had a large Jewish population that had swelled in numbers due to the Claudian edict³³. There was a synagogue on the West side of the Lechaion Road as one entered the city. It was located near the Peribolos of Apollo, an open courtyard.

18:2-3

2: “And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them, 3: and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working, for by trade they were tent-makers.

2-3: These are the Roman names of this Jewish couple. Originating in Pontus, they moved to Rome at a young age and became accustomed to their Roman names to the point we don’t know their Jewish or Greek names. Pontus is on the south shore of the Black Sea, over a thousand miles distant. Yet these two were devout Jews.

One of three conclusions can be said of how they came to their Christian faith. One: They had come to believe in Christ at that great Pentecost day some sixteen years prior in Jerusalem and brought the gospel to Rome, Two: They heard the gospel from others while at Rome or Three: They came to faith through the proclamations of Paul at Corinth. The third choice is the least likely since the expulsion from Rome had to do with followers of “Chrestus” according to Suetonius. There was already a Christian church at Rome before Paul even began his work. Many Jews and Christian did not leave Rome unless they were known as leaders or agitators and had to leave or be arrested.

Their sojourn to Corinth had been quite recent, within the past few months. As Priscilla was the more forward of the two, there would have been no opportunity for a woman to speak in the synagogue. Aquila and his wife were tentmakers by trade and it may have been in this capacity that Paul met them or “came” to them. They could have easily had a shop in Corinth where they sold their wares. It is clear that they had accumulated some wealth. Paul joined them, as he was also a tentmaker. This way he could provide for his own needs, something very important to him.

From later verses we learn that Priscilla was a teacher of the gospel and knew the history and content quite well. This couple was among the most important people in Christian ministry in the New Testament.

The material for the “tents” they made were made of woven goat hair, a product of Cilicia, Paul’s home province. In fact, it was called “cilicium”. A part of their responsibilities in constructing tents was to fabricate center and side poles, and leather straps to be used for ties, dividing curtains and so forth. Their products may have also included leather goods (as early Latin manuscripts indicate regarding “tent making”) beds, bedsteads, cushions etc. If leather was involved, and this is likely, they could also have goods for working animals such as harnesses and so forth.

³³ See the comment at Acts 16:20-22. Also see the introduction to the commentary on I Thessalonians by this author regarding Gaius and Aristarchus.

4: And he was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks. 5: But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul *began* devoting himself completely to the word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. 6: But when they resisted and blasphemed, he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood *be* on your own heads! I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles." 7: Then he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God, whose house was next to the synagogue. 8: Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized. 9: And the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid *any longer*, but go on speaking and do not be silent; 10: for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city." 11: And he settled *there* a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

4-5: Paul, being free from work on the Sabbath, went to the synagogue every Sabbath to present the case for Jesus as the "Christ" (The Greek word for "Messiah"). When Silas and Timothy finally arrived from Macedonia (probably two months later or so, and perhaps accompanied by Aristarchus), Paul apparently lessened his workload to devote himself more fully to the teaching of the word. The Greek for "devoted completely" means that Paul was "fully in the grip" of his mission work. We can infer that Silas and Timothy took up the slack of Paul's work in the tent making industry.

6: "Resisted and blasphemed" – literally "stood against (or opposed) and blasphemed" meaning they attributed the sacred things Paul was proclaiming to demonic influence. "Teachings of the Devil" they claimed, much like the blasphemy of the Jews when claiming that Jesus cast out demons by the power of "Beelzebub". In the presence of this resistance, Paul could do no more in the synagogue and "shook out his garments", indicating he was through with them relieving himself from any further responsibility for their salvation. For the source of his following statement see: II Samuel 1:16; Leviticus 20:9; Matthew 27:24-25.

7: Titius Justus. His name, like Titus, was common. Luke adds "Justus" to differentiate him from many of the same name. He was a gentile, a "worshiper of God" like the "God-fearers" previously described. His house was next to the synagogue and may have even shared a common wall. Here Paul, Silas and Timothy taught the new believers at Corinth. It may well have been aggravating for the synagogue leadership to have a service next door at the same time each Sabbath led by a learned Rabbi like Paul. Paul's desire to avoid unnecessarily provoking the Jews or casting stumbling blocks in their way may have led to the beginnings of worship on the first day of the week.

8: Crispus is a Latin name for this Jewish leader of the synagogue. His role was to direct and arrange for the worship each Sabbath beginning with the "Shema", followed by prayers, chants (songs) of selected Psalms, the reading of the law and prophets and so on. He would select readers, participants, arrange for the service and likely give the exhortation himself. He was a man whose heart was open to the Lord and came to believe, was baptized along with his whole household. Hearing of Crispus' conversion, many others came to faith as well. Paul baptized Crispus personally along with a man named Gaius, the household of Stephanas and perhaps a few others (I Corinthians 1:14-16). Crispus was replaced by a man named "Sosthenes". Other than these, baptisms were conducted by others, likely including Silas and Timothy.

9-10: "Vision" – again, not a dream but a "sighting", possibly an apparition like appearance. The words of the Lord give us insight into Paul's emotional state of mind. Paul was suffering great anxiety. This is a carry over from the time of his severe stoning and then a later beating with rods. Paul had left Thessalonica and Berea because of the threat of more suffering. His injuries and pain were with him constantly. He had been weakened by his suffering. The apprehension that there might come an attack which he could not escape plagued his mind. As resistance grew along with the new church, Paul thought seriously about moving on. But the Lord dissuaded him with a promise that in staying, he would come to no harm. "Many people" – not yet believers in Jesus but people with open hearts to receive the word. Paul would stay until it seemed appropriate to leave. It may have been at this time that Paul undertook a vow to serve the Lord until he was released to leave Corinth. Paul allowed his hair to grow without being cut to demonstrate this vow. See verse 18.

11: "Settled" means he may have procured his own quarters, but it also indicates he was put at ease while in Corinth for a year and a half. The congregation, increasing in size, may have moved to another meeting place. We have some indication of where this may have been, assuming Titius Justus' house became inadequate. Paul notes in his epistle to the church at Rome that "Gaius" (of Corinth) is his host and the church is meeting in his home (Romans 16:23). We do know that the church was a growing congregation.

Many other things happened at Corinth to which Luke was not privy. Both Silas and Timothy were there and taught the new disciples along with Paul (II Corinthians 1:19). From Corinth during this stay Paul wrote the letters to the church at Thessalonica possibly with the help of Silas (Silvanus) (Note: II Thessalonians 3:17 where Paul writes the "greeting" only in his own hand) Later, we have Silvanus assisting Peter with his letter writing in I Peter 5:12. In addition, Paul never failed to tell the new Gentile believers the will and decision of the Jerusalem council (Acts 15) as well as arrange for a collection to be taken for the poor and disenfranchised in Jerusalem. Though Luke does not constantly mention these things, Paul was faithful to do as the Jerusalem Apostles requested. (Note: I Corinthians 16:1-3; II Corinthians 8-9; Philippians 4:15-17; Acts 11:29-30; Acts 24:17; Galatians 2:10.

18:12-17

12: But while Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him before the judgment seat, 13: saying, "This man persuades men to worship God contrary to the law." 14: But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, "If it were a matter of wrong or of vicious crime, O Jews, it would be reasonable for me to put up with you; 15: but if there are questions about words and names and your own law, look after it yourselves; I am unwilling to be a judge of these matters." 16: And he drove them away from the judgment seat. 17: And they all took hold of Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue, and *began* beating him in front of the judgment seat. But Gallio was not concerned about any of these things.

12-13: Gallio was proconsul of Achaia from A.D. 51-52. This sets our time line for Paul's ministry in Corinth as well as the writing of the letters to the believers at Thessalonica. "Achaia" designates the Greek territory of the Peloponnesus and does not necessarily include Athens, which technically, is in "Attica". Gallio was the older brother of Seneca the philosopher who later became tutor to Nero. Gallio was known as a calm and fair ruler (as Seneca himself notes) and this text of Acts bears this out. Sometime during the early ministry of Paul at Corinth, probably within the first six

months, a large number of Jews had presented a formal protest against Paul to Gallio and requested a hearing in his presence. This no doubt came about over a period of time as they had protested and then threatened Paul in some way. Little doubt exists that Paul exercised his right as a Roman citizen and told them that if they had a complaint they had to bring it to the Roman authority. Granted a hearing they came and accompanied Paul to the “Bema” to stand before Gallio. Thus, they were not violent with Paul at all, but wanted to make sure he attended the hearing as was necessary and his that right to present a defense was preserved. As a Roman citizen, Paul could receive no rough handling. The Jews desired to have the Roman authority prohibit Paul’s ministry. Their accusation was the same as that which we saw in Philippi and Thessalonica. Paul was, “introducing a religion contrary to the edict of Claudius”.

14-16: Paul’s defense was prepared and he would have explained that what he was proclaiming was the true intent of the God of Judaism but was not given the opportunity. (See Acts 22-26, especially 22:22-29). Gallio’s response demonstrates that he had been fully informed of the matter ahead of time. He expressed his impatience with the Jews because the core of their case was a matter of religious semantics and had no legal substance. His cutting off the debate indeed shows he was already familiar with the essence and truth of the matter and did not find it worthy of Roman administration. His granting a hearing in the first place was to follow proto-call and avoid this being taken further hopefully satisfying them and quenching further trouble making. His insult was designed to serve this purpose and warn them not to try the patience of his authority.

17: As they were being shoved away from the Bema by Roman soldiers, some of those dissatisfied with Gallio’s decision decided to beat Sosthenes right there and then perhaps in order to get Gallio to reconsider the matter. Sosthenes was the leader of the synagogue apparently having taken Crispus’ place. This is interesting. The antecedent of “they” is the Jews in verses 12-16. If Sosthenes was the leader of the inquisition against Paul, then they beat him because he failed in the effort, as Gallio took no notice of their feeble efforts to gain his attention or reconsider the matter. Luke’s note strongly suggests that this beating was to recapture Gallios’ attention. But why beat Sosthenes?

Sosthenes may have persuaded the Jews not to take direct action against Paul such as manhandling and beating him. He may have talked them into taking the legal road as to avoid Roman action against the Jews themselves. When this failed, they beat Sosthenes in retribution because now, not only did they fail to persuade Gallio to their argument, but the ministry of Paul and the new Christian church had received tacit Roman support.

Having been thus cast out of the synagogue, it seems Sosthenes went to Paul, for in Paul’s later letter to the church at Corinth (I Corinthians 1:1-3), Sosthenes is the only person mentioned in the salutation alongside Paul and he is listed as a brother. Some don’t think this is necessarily the same “Sosthenes” as mentioned in Acts, but evidence is strong for it being the same man. First, there is no other “Sosthenes” mentioned in the N.T.. Further, Paul is writing to the church at Corinth who would only recognise “Sosthenes” as their own since Paul writes nothing else about him to differentiate him from the man they knew. Note Paul’s salutation:

“Paul, called *as* an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their *Lord* and ours: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Sosthenes became a believer and, no longer welcome among his fellow Jews or family, left Corinth when Paul did some months later to join him in the ministry.

18:18

18: Paul, having remained many days longer, took leave of the brethren and put out to sea for Syria, and with him were Priscilla and Aquila. In Cenchrea he had his hair cut, for he was keeping a vow.

18: When about a year and a half had run its course in Corinth, Paul was ready to leave. It was at the end of 52 or early in 53 A.D. Paul would now be around 60 years of age and has been on this journey for close to three years. Planning and preparing carefully, Paul, Priscilla, her husband Aquila, Sosthenes, and a few others set their destinations. For Paul, and some others with him, it was Syria. For others it was Asia Minor and Ephesus. They combined their trip. This is the first verse where Priscilla is mentioned first with Aquila. She becomes prominent as a leader in the early church.

Luke, not having been there with the team at Corinth (still at Philippi), leaves many details out that he would normally include if he had been there. So we are left with research and speculation about certain events and persons. For example, not mentioned are Silas and Timothy as well as Gaius (whom Paul baptized at Corinth) and Aristarchus who may have come to Corinth from Thessalonica with Silas, Timothy, and Erastus, all of whom either accompany Paul at this time or meet him along the way on his third journey. All of them are in Corinth with Paul at this time.

Let's take Gaius and Aristarchus first. The reason for bringing these men up is that according to Acts 19:29 [at Ephesus during the third (next) missionary journey] Gaius and Aristarchus were Paul's "traveling companions from Macedonia". Aristarchus is from Macedonia (Thessalonica) and regularly accompanied Paul. There are two, possibly three men named "Gaius" it seems, and so "Gaius" is a more difficult person to pin down because: 1. "Gaius" is a common name and, 2. There seems to be a differentiation between this Gaius (19:29) and that of 20:4, "Gaius of Derbe". 3: John addresses "Gaius" in III John 1:1. The first two of these men seem to be in Ephesus at the same time. Gaius of Derbe could have easily joined the missionary band as Paul passed through this city at the start of his third journey. He may have had an acquaintance with Timothy of the same region. Together they could have come to Ephesus.

In 19:29, the only "Gaius" that could come close to fitting Luke's description is Gaius of Corinth. Though not strictly of Macedonia, he is from Greece. This is closer than Derbe. Later, when Paul writes to the church at Rome from Corinth, he says in Romans 16:23 that "Gaius" is his host in Corinth and that his home is the place where the church met. This would likely be the same Gaius Paul baptized in Corinth. But which "Gaius" was Paul's traveling companion? And when did he travel with Paul? Luke links this Gaius with Aristarchus of Macedonia. So it is easier to conclude that the "Gaius" of 19:29 is this man.

His travel with Paul becomes difficult to ascertain because if Gaius of Derbe (20:4) accompanied Paul from Ephesus to Greece and back again, Gaius of Corinth may have remained in Greece when the troop returned back through Macedonia and on to Troas, Miletus and then to Jerusalem.

There is no question that Aristarchus remained with Paul for the rest of Paul's life. We see him with Paul years later at Rome, including imprisonment with Paul in his final days, probably suffering death at the hands of Nero as well.

Erastus was or became the City Treasurer at Corinth and a plaque records his name as financing the road construction to the Odeum in Corinth. He shows up at later at Ephesus and is mentioned in the same verse as is Timothy (Acts 19:22). Interestingly, both men are mentioned as those who "ministered" to Paul, or cared for him in a special way. Did they meet Paul at Ephesus and care for him there? Or had they accompanied him on his journey west to Ephesus from Syria, Cilicia or Galatia and, if so, how and when did they get there? Other than the Ephesian reference in Acts 19:22, Erastus is consistently a resident in Corinth (See: Romans 16:23; and II Timothy 4:20)

Now Silas very likely accompanied Paul and the rest to Caesarea from Corinth/Cenchrea. Paul mentions him in his greetings to Thessalonica in the two letters written from Corinth. In his second letter to Corinth written from Macedonia over two and a half years later (during his third journey), Paul reminds the church at Corinth how he, Silas and Timothy taught them. But for the rest of the Book of Acts, Silas is not mentioned again. The reason it can be assumed Silas accompanied Paul to Caesarea at the conclusion of the second journey is that the next mention of Silvanus is as a close companion of Peter and his amanuensis (I Peter 5:12). Peter, of course, is writing from Jerusalem.³⁴

Silas does not accompany Paul on any further journeys and since his home was Jerusalem, it makes sense that he returned home with Paul and left him when Paul went to Antioch from Jerusalem after greeting the brethren there.

After the plans were laid, the travelers went southeast to the Harbor at Cenchrea where Paul completed his vow by getting his haircut (shaved or shorn). If his vow included the terms of the "Nazirite (from the Hebrew 'to separate') vow" as some speculate, then the terms of Numbers, chapter six, would apply. His vow would have been a special vow to the Lord only he could define. In honor of his "separation to God" he would abstain from all products of the grape, any uncleanness including proximity to the dead, and have avoided cutting his hair for the duration of the vow. Following the completion of the vow, certain sacrifices were to be made including the shorn hair.

We know (from Romans 16:1) that a church at Cenchrea sprung up. Perhaps while awaiting a ship to Syria by way of Asia Minor, Paul and his powerful companions evangelized the city. However, Cenchrea was only a few miles southeast of Corinth and others could have brought the word there.

18:19-22

19: They came to Ephesus, and he left them there. Now he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. 20: When they asked him to stay for a longer time, he did not consent, 21: but taking leave of them and saying, "I will return to you again if God wills," he set sail from Ephesus. 22: When he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, and went down to Antioch.

³⁴ A side note. Peter's mention of writing from "Babylon" is a cryptic reference to Jerusalem and can be understood that way in the book of Revelation because of: Is. 1:1-4, 21-24; 21:9-10; Jeremiah 2:19-20; 3:1-3; 51:6-9; Hosea 2:1-7 and Rev. 16:19; 11:8; 17:8; 18:10; 18:18 ff. referring to "the great city" which in 11:8 and other places is Jerusalem. This is not often thought of when "Babylon" is mentioned in Revelation.

19-21: The goal was clearly Syria (verse 18) but in discussion with the others, some decided that moving to Ephesus was in their best interest, if not in the Lord's will. So they combined the two objectives. It took anywhere from eight to fifteen days to sail to Ephesus, depending on the wind, a journey of over 250 miles. They would have stopped at several islands during the sail across the Aegean to spend the night.³⁵ Approaching the harbor at Ephesus, Paul would have been met with the impressive panorama of the incredible "golden" city, the Roman capital of Asia. This was Paul's first visit to Ephesus. Soon after arriving and making arrangements to lodge for a short time, Paul visited the synagogue and presented his message. He found a receptive audience and they asked him to stay on. He had been there a Sabbath or two, perhaps longer, but he declined their invitation to stay longer and promised to return if God permitted him. He set sail from Ephesus, leaving his beloved Priscilla and Aquila along with Sosthenes and others in the city. Going on with Paul would have been Silas and perhaps Timothy, Gaius (of Derbe) and Aristarchus if they had not gone back home from Corinth by way of Macedonia.

22: The trip to Caesarea was lengthy, with many stopovers. Altogether the travel was at least 700 miles, taking a month or more to travel the distance by ship. Paul and his companions may have arrived at Caesarea sometime near the Summer or Autumn of 53. From Caesarea they went "up" to Jerusalem. Jerusalem was over 2000 feet higher than Caesarea. They greeted the church and the apostles there. Offerings collected for the poor were given to the church. The second missionary journey was complete. Leaving Silas in Jerusalem, Paul and possibly one or more traveling companions headed north to Antioch. Arriving there must have been joyous for Paul as he spent many days sharing what God had done over the past three years. Antioch had now become his home. He rested for "sometime" (verse 23) before setting out again.³⁶

18:23-28

³⁵ Shipping in these days seldom included passenger accommodations, although there are some accounts of ships with on-deck stern cabins for officers, dignitaries or passengers. Caligula had a special yacht built for his personal use that included every luxury possible for human comfort. It was 240 feet in length and 78 feet wide. It was discovered and salvaged in the Nemi Lake in 1929-32. In 1950, another of Caligula's ships was found at Ostia some 325 feet long and 75 feet wide. It may have been used to move the Obelisk of Egypt to Italy and was capable of carrying 1,300 tons (2,600,000 pounds) on deck. Cleopatra also had a personal yacht. But generally, excluding warships, ships were freighters. Their design was similar to Spanish or English ships of the 15th and 16th centuries. They ranged from about 60 feet in length for a light merchant ship to over 200 feet in length for a heavy merchantman. The beam was correspondingly 15 feet to 50 feet and 12 to 45 feet in depth. Recently, a Roman freighter of some 100 feet in length was found in the seabed of Madrid Spain. It was carrying some 1,500 amphorae containing fish sauce, a highly prized delicacy. None of the sauce remains, but residue allows for this determination. The holds of these ships were for cargo such as grain, wine, oil, hides and so forth. These decks were sealed against rain and storms. If passengers could be accommodated below decks it had to be quite stuffy and crowded, as the main purpose was cargo transport. This was true up to the 20th century. Vessels primarily for passenger use are unknown. Most had to reside on deck throughout the journey. But the ships did have provisions for passengers, including water and food. Some on deck shelter was provided, probably canopies, tents or stern cabins. Acts 27:37 notes 276 total persons on board this Roman freighter. This ship, the third of three on this journey was roughly 150 feet in length, carrying 70,000 lbs. of cargo with a displacement of 90 tons. It was a grain ship. Some Roman ships carried over 600 people, crew and passengers, plus cargo. All had at least a large square mainsail, and often one or more auxiliary sails. Warships also had oarsmen.

³⁶ There is quite a bit of certainty that Titus was with Paul on this trip. He was from Antioch of Syria and is mentioned as being with Paul in Paul's letters from Ephesus and Macedonia to the church at Corinth. He played a major role at that time even though Luke does not mention him by name in Acts. Some think he was Luke's brother, but that is highly unlikely.

23: And having spent some time *there*, he left and passed successively through the Galatian region and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples. 24: Now a Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures. 25: This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John; 26: and he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. 27: And when he wanted to go across to Achaia, the brethren encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him; and when he had arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace, 28: for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

23: During this sojourn through Galatia and Phrygia (which includes Antioch) to “strengthen the disciples”, Paul also made mention of the continual need to collect funds to help the poor saints in Jerusalem (I Corinthians 16:1).

24: Sometime after Paul had left Ephesus on his earlier second journey, a Jew named Apollos arrived. He was originally of Alexandria in Egypt, and if he was educated there, he was indeed very well equipped to discuss any issue with any citizen of the Empire. By the time Paul was leaving Antioch on his third journey, Apollos was in Ephesus teaching and proclaiming the Gospel as he knew it and doing so with eloquence and boldness in the synagogue. Only knowing the baptism of John the Baptist, and not being up to date on all the matters regarding the Lord, Priscilla and Aquila met with him privately and brought him up to speed. No doubt he was baptized in the Lord at Ephesus.

Meanwhile, Paul was once again traveling past Tarsus and on to the churches of Cilicia and Galatia ministering to all the disciples. He did not travel alone. We can only speculate that Aristarchus and perhaps Timothy and Gaius were with him. If not, other unnamed associates went with Paul until he joined up with Timothy and Gaius.

Sadness must have gripped Paul as he crossed the Cydnus River Bridge overlooking Tarsus. But as he arrived at Derbe and the other cities, how happy they must have been to see him. No doubt his visits there were encouraging to the apostle. The year is either late 53 or mid 54 A.D., following the spring festivals.

At Derbe he may have once again picked up Timothy as well as Gaius if they were not already with him. If not, Timothy was already in Ephesus or was headed that way. Aristarchus may have been with him at Syrian Antioch and accompanied him on this journey. Neither Barnabas nor Silas, who played such a huge role in the first two missionary journeys, are mentioned in Luke’s narrative again. However, both are still active and serving as they are mentioned later on in both the epistles of Paul and Peter.

Paul’s route did not take him north from Pisidian Antioch as on the last journey, but he headed directly for Ephesus, passing through Antioch with caution, as one would expect.

18:27-28

27: And when he wanted to go across to Achaia, the brethren encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him; and when he had arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed

through grace, 28: for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

27: Meanwhile (as Paul was heading west across Galatia and Phrygia) Apollos, having spent several weeks (or even months) at Ephesus, desired to go to Achaia (Corinth). So the believers wrote a letter of introduction to the church at Corinth (and Cenchrea) and sent it along with Apollos. He took a ship docking that docked at Cenchrea then went on up on to Corinth. His ministry in Corinth was very helpful in establishing a firm mental/scriptural foundation for the faith of the new believers. The Greek word for “helpful” is “sumballo” indicating this emphasis. Coinciding with this, Apollos also was able to powerfully “confute” (or “convince and prove”) to many Jews (“down to the finish”) in a public forum (not in the synagogue) that Jesus was indeed the promised Messiah.

28: Apollos made quite an impact in Corinth and when he left, a division began to occur in the church. Some thought Paul was the most important teacher, others began to tout Apollos as the one to heed. While still others felt that Peter was the “true” apostle. Whether Peter ever visited Corinth or not we do not know, but he had a following among purists that thought of him as the chief apostle, second to no one else. After Paul arrived at Ephesus and had been there for a while, word began to come to him through letters that the church was having several problems. But, we get ahead of ourselves.

Chapter Nineteen

19:1-7

1: It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus, and found some disciples. 2: He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they *said* to him, "No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." 3: And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" And they said, "Into John's baptism." 4: Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus." 5: When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6: And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they *began* speaking with tongues and prophesying. 7: There were in all about twelve men.

1: “Upper Country” indicates that he may not have traveled the “lower” Roman Road through Colossae, Laodocia and Hieropolis. In fact, it appears he never visited these cities (Colossians 2:1) until, perhaps, a fourth missionary journey took place³⁷. The road he took through “the upper country” seems to be the more direct road west of Pisidian Antioch following the Cayster River Valley rather than the Lycus River Valley. Approaching Ephesus he discovered some Christian disciples who were Jewish converts.

The Ephesian territory encompassed much more than the city proper. In fact, as the Roman capital of Asia and the chief city, it encompassed a confederation of cities, similar to our “counties” today. Paul’s letter to the “Ephesians” may well have been a “circular letter,” that is, directed to Ephesus and churches nearby or within the confederation. This makes sense, since these disciples would

³⁷ See the Excursus beginning on page 184.

have certainly received more complete instruction if they lived in or near the city proper considering the Apostolic and Christian leadership there prior to Paul's arrival.

2-7: There was some fellowship and discussion that prompted the question, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" These disciples were in a very elementary state of understanding, much like the Jews who, following John the Baptist, were baptized by him but instructed to believe in Jesus as the Messiah. It is possible that they may have been in Israel at the time of John's ministry, followed John (whose fame had been spread over great distances) and actually been baptized by him. Otherwise, they had been converted by those who had returned to Ephesus prior to the Day of Pentecost, being baptized by them in the preparatory purpose John had announced.

This discussion recorded by Luke (verses 1-7) demonstrates that Paul had a set idea of how faith in Christ ought to progress. Faith in Christ is proceeded by baptism in water in the name of Christ, followed by the laying on of hands and an additional baptism in the Holy Spirit, followed by speaking in tongues and prophesying. Although this is not always the case, it seems to be what Paul expects to happen.³⁸

19:8-10

8: And he entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading *them* about the kingdom of God. 9: But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the people, he withdrew from them and took away the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. 10: This took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

8: Luke, still not present, highlights the ministry in Ephesus. But Paul was eager to get to Ephesus to see those he promised to visit again if the Lord allowed (18:20-21). His dearest friends were there including Priscila, Aquila, Sosthenes, Timothy, Gaius (of Corinth), Aristarchus, Erastus, and so on. There was no doubt a happy reunion and they were able to stay for a time at the house of Priscilla and Aquila (I Corinthians 16:19). Soon thereafter, Apollos returned to Ephesus from Corinth and stayed there working with Paul and the church.

9: Paul once again followed his custom of going first to the synagogue at Ephesus. He was allowed to do so for three months (six or more Sabbaths) his theme being "The Kingdom of God".³⁹ Resistance rose up from those who became hardened to his teaching. Some began to contradict his teaching and cause disruption. So Paul withdrew from the synagogue (perhaps with his usual "flourish") along with many new believers and began to gather at the School of Tyrannus. It appears he stayed there some two years.

This edifice in Ephesus has not been discovered or excavated as yet. The Word for "school" is "σχολη" ("sko-lay") from which we derive the word "school". It comes from the root idea of an unoccupied building that is not a residence, in which various activities of leisure or study take place. This is the only place in the N.T. the word is used.

³⁸ Again, see this author's work entitled, "A Brief Word Study Concerning The 'Gifts' Of The Holy Spirit".

³⁹ The essence of this approach is to define the elements of God's Kingdom in terms of the historical and prophetic events from Genesis throughout the era of the kings and prophets demonstrating how Jesus ultimately fulfilled the entire plan of God including the future fulfillment of prophecies not yet fulfilled.

“Tyrannus” is also unknown. However, Robertson’s Word Pictures notes: “The name Tyrannus (our tyrant) is a common one. It is an inscription in the Columbarium of the Empress Livia as that of a physician in the court. Furneaux suggests the possibility that a relative of this physician was lecturing on medicine in Ephesus and so as a friend of Luke, the physician, would be glad to help Paul about a place to preach. It was probably a public building or lecture hall with this name whether hired by Paul or loaned to him. The pagan sophists often spoke in such halls. The Codex Bezae adds “from the fifth hour to the tenth” as the time allotted Paul for his work in this hall, which is quite possible, from just before midday till the close of the afternoon (from before the noon meal till two hours before sunset) each day. Here Paul had great freedom and a great hearing. As the church grows there will be other places of meeting as the church in the house of Aquila and Priscilla”. (1Co_16:19).⁴⁰

10: Paul was using this hall for two years and the church was growing (54 A.D.-56 A.D.). During the first few months of Paul’s sojourn at Ephesus, he received word of growing conflicts and divisions at Corinth. He began a series of letters over the next two years instructing the church regarding what it means to live as a Christian and attempted to adjudicate several disputes.

During this time (54 A.D.) the Roman Emperor, Claudius, was poisoned by his fourth wife Agrippina (also his niece). She did this because Claudius displaced her son Nero in favor of his son Britannicus (by Messalina his third wife) as successor to the throne. She saw to it later that Britannicus was also murdered so that there would be no opposition to her son Nero ascending to the throne which he did in 54 A.D. at the age of sixteen. Under the tutelage of Seneca (Gallio’s younger brother) and others, Nero’s reign began in a sensible way. The edict exiling non-conforming Jews from Rome was lifted and Aquila and Priscilla left Ephesus, (probably in 55) and returned to Rome. This was a sad departure, no doubt, but the church at Rome had been largely disintegrated due to Claudius’s edict, and Priscilla and Aquila no doubt felt constrained to return home and restore leadership and fellowship to the believers.⁴¹

“...all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.” Many came to Ephesus from all over “Asia” and returned to their cities bringing the gospel with them. Prominent is the work at Colossae, and Laodicea probably begun by Epaphras and Philemon. Other churches sprang up at Hieropolis, Sardis, Philadelphia, Pergamum, Smyrna, Thyatira, Miletus, Magnesia and so on. This work continued for over two years, probably closer to three. If Paul himself traveled to some of these areas, we do not know (see: 20:18). But sometime since his first journey to this point he suffered numerous beatings and trials. We will see this in a moment.

From Ephesus, Paul wrote several letters. The letter to the Galatians is difficult to date. It is placed anywhere between 48 and 57 A.D. If it was written before any of the last two journeys to this area, his visits to these areas are without incident or comment by Luke. One would think that the great “Galatian Heresy” would draw comment from the apostle or his biographer regarding the purpose of one of those visits. Yes, the Judaizers were at work almost immediately, and Paul’s conflict with them in person begins at Antioch (chapter 15:1-2) initiating the Jerusalem conference. Afterwards Paul and Silas visit Galatia and the churches rejoice over the news of the Council. Since Paul notes the council in his epistle, he had to have written after the second journey began or, more likely, after the third journey was under way. So, he could have written it from Ephesus around 54-58.

⁴⁰ “Word Pictures In The New Testament”, Volume II, A.T. Robertson, Harper and Brothers, 1931.

⁴¹ Several years later, they were forced to once again leave Rome as the persecution under Nero heated up. They returned to Ephesus.

Paul wrote I Corinthians from Ephesus (I Corinthians 16:8). II Corinthians came later, possibly after Paul left Ephesus for Macedonia (Acts 20:1). There are possibly three letters included in our New Testament, II Corinthians being a compilation of two.⁴² In any case, one of the most interesting personal passages Paul writes is found in II Corinthians 11:23-33,

23: Are they servants of Christ?--I speak as if insane--I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. 24: Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine *lashes*. 25: Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. 26: *I have been* on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from *my* countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; 27: *I have been* in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. 28: Apart from *such* external things, there is the daily pressure on me *of* concern for all the churches. 29: Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern? 30: If I have to boast, I will boast of what pertains to my weakness. 31: The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, He who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. 32: In Damascus the ethnarch under Aretas the king was guarding the city of the Damascenes in order to seize me, 33: and I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and *so* escaped his hands.

When and where did all this occur? Luke only notes his suffering of stoning at Derbe on Paul's first journey, his beating with rods at Philippi on his second journey, and his being whipped in Jerusalem (chapter 21) well after this letter to Corinth was apparently written. Paul notes the Damascus experience at the end of the report. Is it possible Paul suffered some of this torture in Damascus or even in Tarsus later on when his community discovered his "treason"? This must be considered.

Earlier, in II Corinthians 1:8-11 he writes,

8: For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came *to us* in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; 9: indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead; 10: who delivered us from so great a *peril of death*, and will deliver *us*, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us, 11: you also joining in helping us through your prayers, so that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed on us through *the prayers of many*.

This time in "Asia" could include not only Ephesus, but surrounding territories, although Paul claims he was with the believers in Ephesus "the whole time" (20:18). Somewhere, unaccounted for by Luke, is a greater physical suffering than we see in Acts alone. Earlier, when passing through Pisidian Antioch more than once, suffering of this degree may have occurred unnoted by Luke. It is hard to say. Paul attests to the veracity of his sufferings in verse 31 of II Corinthians. We are left with conjecture as to when it all occurred.

Acts 19:11-20

⁴² See excursus "THE CORINTHIAN MINISTRY AND CORRESPONDENCE" at the end of chapter 19 detailing Paul's journeys and the complexity of the mission at Corinth.

11. God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, 12: so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out. 13: But also some of the Jewish exorcists, who went from place to place, attempted to name over those who had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, "I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches." 14: Seven sons of one Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. 15: And the evil spirit answered and said to them, "I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?" 16: And the man, in whom was the evil spirit, leaped on them and subdued all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. 17: This became known to all, both Jews and Greeks, who lived in Ephesus; and fear fell upon them all and the name of the Lord Jesus was being magnified. 18: Many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices. 19: And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and *began* burning them in the sight of everyone; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. 20: So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing.

11-12. "extraordinary miracles" literally, "powers, the ones not normally occurring". The idea is that God was doing these things through Paul, beyond anything else Paul had ever had experienced. "Sweat towels" is the meaning for "handkerchiefs". "Went out from his body (skin)"... These are descriptive of workmen's garments he had worn. From this we can suggest that Paul, according to his custom, employed himself working in the tent/leather making industry once again. He may have also have been living with Aquila and Priscilla as the church met in their home. After they left Ephesus for Rome, Paul and others may have continued the business, resided there in their home and met with believers there for fellowship and worship.

The action of sending out garments Paul had worn brought glory to God. This could easily have become a rite of superstition where faith was in the item of clothing rather than in God. But the point became clear as to why God provided this ministry. It was to offset the vast superstitions of the people and to bring them to Christ as the true source of healing and truth. This is seen later within the context. Luke writes of these events so the cause of the riot later on might be understood.

13. These Jews practiced the business of exorcism and did it for money. They traveled from place to place selling their practice like the familiar Gypsy Fortune Tellers or "snake oil salesmen". When they heard of the power in the name of "The Jesus", they began to employ it in their exorcisms. Treating it as an incantation, it appears to have had little success as the following example illustrates.⁴³

14-16. This man and his seven sons are unknown to history. If a "high priest" he either got left out of history or adopted the title for his own purposes. In attempting to drive out a demon using this "incantation" involving the name of Jesus, the evil spirit answered back in disdain and, through the man possessed, leaped upon the seven sons overpowering them tearing off their clothes. He left them wounded with shredded clothing barely, if at all, covering them.

⁴³ Josephus (Antiquities VIII 2.5) while commenting on the wisdom of Solomon notes his knowledge of nature and... "demonstrated his exquisite knowledge of their several properties. God also enabled him to learn that skill which expels demons, which is a science useful and sanative to men. He composed such incantations also by which distempers are alleviated. And he left behind him the manner of using exorcisms, by which they drive away demons, so that they never return; and this method of cure is of great force unto this day; ..." Jews from his time practiced exorcism based on Solomon's secrets. See also Matthew 12:27 (Luke 11:19).

17: “This became known to all”... Not just the events surrounding these Jewish exorcists, but the entire “happening” in Ephesus. “Fear fell upon them all”... “φοβος” (“pho-bos”). This is the strongest form of fear extending even to terror. We get our word “phobia” from this Greek word. The name of the Lord (Jesus) was being magnified because the word had gotten out as to how these miracles had taken place.

18: Many of those who believed, came, one after another, telling of their involvement or belief in false, superstitious or demonic practices, even after their confessed faith in Christ. This was the beginning of a great revival. It cannot be dismissed that some were attempting to hold allegiance to the Greek gods and goddesses (especially Artemis) and Jesus at the same time, simply adding Him to their pantheon, “covering all the bases” so to speak.

19-20: “Magic” is a poor translation. “Practiced various works” is literal. It doesn’t mean sorcery alone but likely includes such practices. This is not like the “magic” of Simon Magus. “Books” are scrolls. “Fifty thousand pieces of silver” – not the price of the materials but of the value of the contents as sold on the market. This total burned value would, in today’s dollars, be in the neighborhood of twenty thousand dollars. The impact upon this city and the province was great.

19:21-22

21: Now after these things were finished, Paul purposed in the Spirit to go to Jerusalem after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome." 22: And having sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while.

21: “finished” means “fulfilled their purpose”. Apparently, Luke suggests that the miracles through Paul’s hands (verses 11-12 above) and subsequent events (even opposition and the onset of false teachers) brought about the result God intended, the salvation of multitudes. Actually, before this verse, where Paul “purposed” (laid his plans before the Spirit - note: Proverbs 16:1,3,9; 19:21) to return to Jerusalem after seeing the disciples in Macedonia and Greece (Corinth), then set his sights on Rome afterwards, other things took place. There was much more going on in Ephesus than Luke reports in Acts.

First, Apollos, having been to Corinth while Paul was journeying to Ephesus on his third journey, had returned to Ephesus. He and Paul were now working together (I Corinthians 4:6; 16:12). Either before meeting in the school of Tyrannus or afterward, the believers met in the home of Priscilla (Prisca) and Aquila before the beloved couple moved back to Rome. Prisca and Aquila return to Rome after Claudius’ assassination. His successor, Nero, lifted the ban on the Jews in Rome. Paul notes that this couple “risked their necks” for him (Romans 16:4) and this could have happened here at Ephesus or earlier in Corinth. With him now in Ephesus (along with Apollos) are Timothy, the two men named Gaius, Aristarchus, Sosthenes, Erastus, and soon Stephanas, Fortunatas and Achaicus (See following paragraph). Luke is still in Philippi.

Second, during the lengthy Ephesian stay, (some three years altogether) Paul receives word of problems in the churches of Galatia and writes the Book of Galatians. Around the same time, he receives word of problems with immorality at Corinth to which he responds by letter prior to what we call “I Corinthians”. This prior letter is actually noted in I Corinthians 5:9-13. Some think that I Corinthians 6:15-20 might be a part of this first letter. Nevertheless, what we have deemed I

Corinthians was not his first letter after all. That first letter was either misunderstood or misconstrued for the matter wasn't solved (note: I Corinthians 5:1ff.) Paul found out from an additional letter from Corinth by "Chloe's people" (I Cor. 1:11) and perhaps from additional correspondence that there were other matters as well to deal with (I Cor. 7:1 ff.). This correspondence may have come by the hands of Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus (I Cor. 16:15-18); (note also I Cor. 1:14-16). To This (these) letter(s), Paul (with some agitation) writes the bulk of I Corinthians. He may have sent this by the hand of Timothy and Erastus (of Corinth who was heading home). Note: Acts 19:22, and I Cor. 4:14-17. Paul felt it was important to send these two men on ahead. The problems at Corinth needed attention. Some there were apparently not happy about Paul coming while others were not happy about his not coming immediately (II Cor. 10:1-6,8-11; II Cor 12:20-21; I. Cor. 4:18-21; 16:1-12). It had been communicated to the church that Paul was (likely) coming by ship, but now he had refrained from coming. He apologizes for this later.⁴⁴ But his sending these two men out of Ephesus could have been to protect them as these events coincided with the opposition beginning to grow in Ephesus. (See: "Excursus" at the end of this chapter)

Timothy and Erastus are mentioned as two among those who "ministered" to Paul. This indicates that Paul had need of being cared for. He was in poor physical condition by his own admission. His suffering by this time had been severe and physical damage had taken its toll. He was not a young man at this juncture, and probably in his late fifties or early sixties.

Third, also during this same time, Epaphras and Philemon have apparently been to Ephesus (probably on business) and have come to Christ. Spending time with Paul and his companions (perhaps at the school of Tryannus) they take the gospel back to Colossae. The word gets to Hierapolis and Laodicea as well. Paul and these men become close friends.

Fourth, there is a public opposition to Paul and the "Way" led by one Demetrius, a silversmith (following verses).

Fifth, Paul is noted as staying in "Asia" for a while after sending off Timothy and Erastus. What does this mean? First, it is in contrast to "Macedonia" in the previous verse and might simply mean "Ephesus". But the reason given by Paul in his letter to Corinth is found in 16:7-9. "For I do not wish to see you now *just* in passing; for I hope to remain with you for some time, if the Lord permits. But I will remain in Ephesus until Pentecost; for a wide door for effective *service* has opened to me, and there are many adversaries." Second, in the wider sense of the word "Asia", Paul could have journeyed to other places and cities in the province to conduct a more extensive mission, while avoiding some growing conflict (note: verse 26). Finally, it is possible that Paul went to Corinth and back to Ephesus (see again the "Excursus").

His desire to remain until Pentecost may not have been realized. Pentecost came towards the end of May and May was the month of the festival of Artemis (Diana) when great crowds came to

⁴⁴ Paul's fourth letter from Macedonia months later bears this plan out. II Cor. 1:15-19, "In this confidence I intended at first to come to you, so that you might twice receive a blessing; that is, to pass your way into Macedonia, and again from Macedonia to come to you, and by you to be helped on my journey to Judea. Therefore, I was not vacillating when I intended to do this, was I? Or what I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, so that with me there will be yes, yes and no, no *at the same time*? But as God is faithful, our word to you is not yes and no. For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us--by me and Silvanus and Timothy--was not yes and no, but is yes in Him.

Ephesus. The riot in Ephesus likely occurred prior to the festival, an event the Ephesian artisans looked forward to with anticipation of great profits. The effect of the gospel upon the population seems to have cut into the idolatry to such an extent that those in the idol, god and goddess business were losing money.

19:23-28

23: About that time there occurred no small disturbance concerning the Way. 24: For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, was bringing no little business to the craftsmen; 25: these he gathered together with the workmen of similar *trades*, and said, "Men, you know that our prosperity depends upon this business. 26: "You see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable number of people, saying that gods made with hands are no gods *at all*. 27: "Not only is there danger that this trade of ours fall into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis be regarded as worthless and that she whom all of Asia and the world worship will even be dethroned from her magnificence." 28: When they heard *this* and were filled with rage, they *began* crying out, saying, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"

23: "No small disturbance". Not just over Paul's teaching alone, but because of the impact on the people of the city. "The Way". The third time Luke has used this word in this manner to describe what later became to be known as Christianity.

24: "Demetrius" is a common name and so it is difficult to identify him anywhere else in historical texts. The name "Demetrius" is inscribed on the Prytaneum⁴⁵ as a temple warden. The name is also found in III John 1:12, but unlikely the same man. He made silver reproductions of the temple itself. None have ever been excavated. Any found, may have been melted down later Christians after Constantine. Demetrius had a position of influence in the city and likely led the guild of the artisans of Artemis. He sent business to craftsmen producing all sorts of items relating to the temple. Statues of silver, terra cotta, along with artifacts of all kinds and sizes were produced for sale to visitors to the city, especially images of Artemis herself.

25: Demetrius gathered all the tradesmen involved with producing temple artifacts and began with a common theme...money!

26-28: Money is being lost and more will be lost because, (secondly), "this Paul" is teaching that artifacts representing the gods and goddesses are false. So the religion card is played. As one of the seven wonders of the world, the temple of Artemis drew many visitors. It was several times larger than the Parthenon at Athens, in fact nearly the size of a football stadium from the outside. The excuse for the protest was religious while the real reason was money.

19:29-41

29: The city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed with one accord into the theater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia. 30: And when Paul wanted to go into the assembly, the disciples would not let him. 31: Also some of the Asiarchs who were friends of his sent to him and repeatedly urged him not to venture into

⁴⁵ The Prytaneum was the building housing the center of government as well as the "keepers" of the temple to Artemis. Only two excavated columns have been resurrected to date and the names of these officials are inscribed thereon.

the theater. 32: So then, some were shouting one thing and some another, for the assembly was in confusion and the majority did not know for what reason they had come together. 33: Some of the crowd concluded *it was* Alexander, since the Jews had put him forward; and having motioned with his hand, Alexander was intending to make a defense to the assembly. 34: But when they recognized that he was a Jew, a *single* outcry arose from them all as they shouted for about two hours, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" 35: After quieting the crowd, the town clerk said, "Men of Ephesus, what man is there after all who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of the *image* which fell down from heaven? 36: "So, since these are undeniable facts, you ought to keep calm and to do nothing rash. 37: "For you have brought these men *here* who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of our goddess. 38: "So then, if Demetrius and the craftsmen who are with him have a complaint against any man, the courts are in session and proconsuls are *available*; let them bring charges against one another. 39: "But if you want anything beyond this, it shall be settled in the lawful assembly. 40: "For indeed we are in danger of being accused of a riot in connection with today's events, since there is no *real* cause *for it*, and in this connection we will be unable to account for this disorderly gathering." 41: After saying this he dismissed the assembly.

29: The tradesmen incited the entire city proclaiming the their goddess was being "regarded as worthless" by those of the "Way". So the city rushed to the theatre dragging Gaius and Aristarchus along. These two men are noted as "traveling companions" of Paul (see comment on 18:18). It looks as if Timothy and Erastus have since departed. This event also shows that the theatres of the time were used for places of public assembly as well as for drama, music, lectures, athletic events and readings.

30-31: Paul did not wish his close friends to suffer for his ministry. He was willing to risk harm and deflect the rage of the crowd upon himself. He may have also sensed an opportunity for the gospel here as well. But many of the new believers from the city tried to stop Paul from going. It seems he was determined. But word got to some "Asiarchs"⁴⁶ who had befriended Paul and they persuaded him to stay away from the theatre. These citizens knew the temperament of their own citizens and of the artisan guild.

32-33: Having rushed to the theatre because there was something big going on, the crowds arriving were trying to determine what the "big deal" was. Some people shouted it was one thing, others another. The prevailing theme was that there was a movement to attack and diminish Artemis. Meanwhile, some Jews mounted the platform and one of their number, Alexander, motioned for quiet. From this it appears the crowd attributed the source for this uproar among the artisans to be the Jews in the city (who were of course, against idolatry). This is understandable as Paul was also a Jew. Alexander was about to address the crowd, hoping to divert their rage to Gaius and Aristarchus. It is possible that Alexander was himself an artisan, but not an idol maker. Paul mentions an "Alexander the 'coppersmith'" in II Timothy 4:14 who "did me much harm". Perhaps the Jews felt Alexander could gain an audience being one of the guild. It didn't work.

34: They did not know at first that Alexander was a Jew, as clothing was similar among all the citizens of Ephesus. But his identity as a Jew became quickly known. Concluding Alexander and

⁴⁶ These "Asiarchs" were a council of ten wealthy men who were elected to promote the worship of the emperor and preside at the games, worship festivals and the like at their own expense. Each province had such a council.

the Jews to be the cause of the movement against Artemis, the crowd began to shout “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians”. They carried on for two hours not allowing any Jew to address them.

35-36: The “town clerk” is actually one of the highest officials in the city. He was the intermediary between city officials and the Roman governor (or proconsul). As such, he drafted laws in conjunction with the Roman commanders, was the city treasurer, leader of the city assembly, and was the chief officer of the city. The name of this man would appear on Ephesian coins during the years of his office much like our paper money carries the signatures of the treasurer and secretary of the treasury during their tenure. This man no doubt investigated the matter carefully before addressing the crowd.

His high rank immediately quiets the crowd. He reminds the crowd that Ephesus that they (especially city leadership) are the guardians of the great temple and its goddess and so there is nothing to worry about. He appeals to them, not upon monetary grounds the artisans were truly concerned about, but upon the religious grounds the artisans put forth. He wants the people to recognize that these Jews cannot overturn the city or its famous temple, after all, not only are the city officials committed to this guardianship, but they have Roman support. So what are the people worried about? It is unnecessary to do anything “rash” (or reckless). There was a toleration of many religions in the Roman Empire at that time and any unrecognized religion would be scrutinized. But Judaism had long been recognized even though the Jewish monotheism and tradition was often an irritation to non-Jews and the Romans. The plan of the artisans backfired badly.

37: “These men”...probably Gaius and Aristarchus. Neither charge could be leveled at the Christians. This is notable in a city like this. They simply presented the truth of the gospel of Christ without resorting to inflammatory specific statements about the local religion.

38-39: “Against one another”...possibly referring to Alexander. He makes it clear that any matters of legal standing must be properly adjudicated and not settled by riot.

40-41: A clear reference to chancing Roman intervention if the crowd did not settle down and return quietly to their own business. The matter for which they gathered was not only foolish, but offered the possibility of initiating Roman intervention because of the present activity of the crowd making the original cause a moot point. The assembly was dismissed and the crowd dispersed to their own business. No doubt there was some grumbling among the rabble who were spoiling for a good fight.

EXCURSUS
PAUL’S MISSIONARY JOURNEYS FOCUSING ON
THE CORINTHIAN MINISTRY AND CORRESPONDENCE*

PAUL’S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY – Acts 13:1-14:28	c. 47-48 A.D.
Lengthy ministry at Antioch of Syria	c. 48-49
Jews expelled from Rome by Claudius	c. 49
COUNCIL AT JERUSALEM – Acts 15:1-29	c. 50-51
Aquila and Priscilla move to Corinth. (Acts 18:1-2)	c. 51-52
Paul writes the book of Galatians (?) [Most likely time]	c. 51-52
PAUL’S SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY – Acts 15:36-18:22	c. 52-54
Paul reaches Corinth, meets Priscilla and Aquila. (Acts 18:1-18)	c. Autumn of 52
Paul leaves Corinth for Ephesus with Priscilla and Aquila. (Acts 18:18-1)	c. 53
Apollos arrives at Ephesus and is taught by Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:24-28) Apollos journeys to Corinth. (Acts 19:1)	c. 54
PAUL’S THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY – Acts 18:23-20:38*	c. 55-58
Paul arrives in Ephesus – stays three years or so (Acts 19:1-10), enjoys Reunion with Prisca and Aquila) (I Cor. 16:19.) Writes Galatians (?).	c. Late 55
Apollos returns to Ephesus. Paul teaches in school of Tyrannus two years.	c. 56
Paul receives information about church members in Corinth associating with immoral people and responds with a letter mentioned in I Corinthians 5:9-13. (II Corinthians 6:14 -7:1 ff. may be a portion of this letter.)	c. Late 56
Then Paul receives information from “Chloe’s people” about divisions in the church and other matters. (I Corinthians 1:10-11), (I Corinthians 5:1) There was also a letter from the leaders of the Church. (I Corinthians 7:1) This letter may have been brought to Paul by Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus. (I Corinthians 16:17-18)	c. Early 57
The church is meeting in home of Aquila and Priscilla. Paul writes I Corinthians possibly sending it by the hand of Timothy (and Erastus) who also is to remind them of the truth of the Gospel and bring correction. (I Corinthians 4:17-21, 16:10-11)	
Aquila and Priscilla return to Rome after the death of Claudius and the lifting of the ban on the Jews by Nero. **Timothy’s return apparently does not bring good news - or - Paul goes to Corinth. (note: II Corinthians 2:1,13:1 where Paul notes that he is coming for a third time)	c. Mid -Late 57
After returning to Ephesus (?), Paul writes sorrowful letter (noted in II Corinthians 2:1-13 and is possibly II Corinthians 10-13). There also may be problems at Athens, (II Cor. 1:1) He sends it by the hand of Titus and an unnamed “brother” (II Cor. 12:18).	c. Early 58
He leaves for Macedonia with his companions. (Acts 20:1)*** Sometime later, Titus returns to Paul in Macedonia with good, comforting news. II Corinthians 7:2-ff.)	c. Mid 58
Paul writes letter of reconciliation by the hand of Titus prior to going to Corinth. (Probably the remainder of II Corinthians) Titus does a good job of preparing the way for Paul. He remains in Corinth three months. (Acts 20:2-3)	c. Autumn 58
He writes the book of Romans.	c. Late 58 –Early 59
He then leaves for Macedonia where he stays for Passover before continuing on. (Acts 20:3-6)	c. Early 59
	c. Spring 59

*This outline of events and correspondence is but one of several possibilities for the exact nature and number of these letters and visits cannot be determined with certainty. This reconstruction is approximate at best. ** At this point we must work from conjecture and educated guesses. *** There is a possibility Paul was able to travel on to Illyricum before coming to Greece. See Romans 15:19. Acts 20:2 may provide for this possibility. A likely fourth journey is not included in this outline.

Chapter Twenty

20:1-2

1: After the uproar had ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and when he had exhorted them and taken his leave of them, he left to go to Macedonia. 2: When he had gone through those districts and had given them much exhortation, he came to Greece.

1: “The disciples” - those in Ephesus and the surrounding areas. “Exhorted them” – “beseech”, “comfort”, “encourage”, “give help” are all tied up in this word, “παρακελεω” (para-ka-leh-oh), the same word used to describe the person and work of The Holy Spirit. Paul then leaves for Macedonia. His goal is to re-visit Macedonia and hopefully the Christians at Corinth about whom he is terribly concerned. He has sent at least two rather strong letters, the second one by the hand of Timothy. When Timothy returned to Ephesus some months later, his report was not encouraging. Paul then writes a third letter of “sorrow” (See II Cor. 7:8. This letter may actually be found in II Co. 10-13), sending it by the hand of Titus. Titus was apparently supposed to meet him at Troas, but was not there when Paul arrived.

2: Luke sharply abbreviates this time displaying his goal of showing both how the gospel spread as well as clarifying the truth about Christ and the message of the gospel. Paul’s journey from Ephesus stopped over at Troas with expectations of meeting Titus and finding out what transpired in Corinth. Also, with him on this journey are Timothy, Aristarchus, and Gaius (probably both men) for sure and possibly Sosthenes (of Corinth), Tychicus, and Trophimus (of Asia-specifically Ephesus - Acts 21:29). We have no word of whether Fortunatus, Achaicus and Stephanas were with Paul at this time or had returned to Corinth previously by ship. Either is possible. Apollos is the mystery. Likely he stayed at Ephesus.

Disappointed at not finding Titus there at Troas, yet also finding a “door” open there for the gospel, Paul had no rest for his spirit but decided to continue on toward Macedonia. (II Cor. 2:12-13) No doubt he traveled by ship to Neapolis and walked to Philippi. He likely stayed with Lydia and visited his fellow believers including Luke who had been there (perhaps off and on) for over five years. Luke did not accompany Paul and his companions on to Corinth. He had had no contact with the church and they didn’t know him. The work at Philippi was apparently developing nicely, and except for a few problems, and was one of Paul’s great sources of rejoicing.

However, this trip to Macedonia was especially physically difficult for Paul. He makes a point of noting his sufferings and depression while there. It the “nick of time” either while in Philippi or perhaps Thessalonica or Berea, Titus arrives from Corinth. His news is a huge relief to Paul as the Corinthians have softened and unified around Paul, his teachings and the brethren helping Paul.

Note: From his (fourth) letter to the Church at Corinth from Macedonia, (II Corinthians 7:5-16)

5: For even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted on every side: conflicts without, fears within. 6: But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus; 7: and not only by his coming, but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you, as he reported to us your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me; so that I rejoiced even more. 8: For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it--*for* I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while—9: I now

rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to *the point of* repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to *the will of* God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. 10: For the sorrow that is according to *the will of* God produces a repentance without regret, *leading* to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death. 11: For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter. 12: So although I wrote to you, *it was* not for the sake of the offender nor for the sake of the one offended, but that your earnestness on our behalf might be made known to you in the sight of God. 13: For this reason we have been comforted. And besides our comfort, we rejoiced even much more for the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all. 14: For if in anything I have boasted to him about you, I was not put to shame; but as we spoke all things to you in truth, so also our boasting before Titus proved to be *the* truth. 15: His affection abounds all the more toward you, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how you received him with fear and trembling. 16: I rejoice that in everything I have confidence in you.

The above document itself is a portion of Paul's response to Corinth in light of Titus' news. This letter was carried on to Corinth by Timothy,⁴⁷ Titus, a brother of "fame" and others.⁴⁸ In this letter Paul mentions Titus and his fine ministry eight times. Paul's hope was that it would reconcile him with any in the church who still held hard feelings toward him. There is a hint that some problems may have occurred at Athens as well because the of the opening address of this letter, "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy *our* brother, To the church of God which is at Corinth ***with all the saints who are throughout Achaia***" (bold italics mine) Whether he heard

⁴⁷ The letter of II Corinthians notes much of how Paul has been suffering. He lays out his suffering and personal life in no greater detail than in this letter. Note how it opens: "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy *our* brother, To the church of God which is at Corinth with all the saints who are throughout Achaia: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ. But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer; and our hope for you is firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also you are *sharers* of our comfort. For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came *to us* in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead; who delivered us from so great a *peril of* death, and will deliver *us*, He on whom we have set our hope. (II Corinthians 1:1-10) There is more throughout the letter.

⁴⁸ Paul writes about the offering for the poor in Jerusalem in this "reconciliation" letter. "But thanks be to God who puts the same earnestness on your behalf in the heart of Titus. For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest, he has gone to you of his own accord. We have sent along with him the brother whose fame in *the things of* the gospel *has spread* through all the churches; and not only *this*, but he has also been appointed by the churches to travel with us in this gracious work, which is being administered by us for the glory of the Lord Himself, and *to show* our readiness, taking precaution so that no one will discredit us in our administration of this generous gift; for we have regard for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men. We have sent with them our brother, whom we have often tested and found diligent in many things, but now even more diligent because of *his* great confidence in you. As for Titus, *he is* my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brethren, *they are* messengers of the churches, a glory to Christ. Therefore openly before the churches, show them the proof of your love and of our reason for boasting about you." II Corinthians 8:16-24 Who is this brother in whom all can trust? Apparently he went to Jerusalem with Paul. Apollos? One of those in verse four? Apollos is not mentioned in verse four, and though he and Paul had much ministry together, he may not have been on this trip, but rather stayed at Ephesus. The likely candidate from the evidence is either Tychicus or Trophimus (See footnote 34).

back that all was well or simply continued on to Corinth, we do not know. It is possible that he may have also visited Illyricum at this juncture (Romans 15:19). 20:2 allows for this possibility. If so, Luke makes no specific mention of it, yet Paul's letter to Titus a few years later requests that he meet Paul in Nicopolis in Illyricum. It is hard to imagine Paul going to Illyricum while so anxious to meet Titus. In any case he sailed (or traveled by land) into Greece probably accompanied by those mentioned in verse four. He passed through Athens once again on his way.

20:3

3: And *there* he spent three months, and when a plot was formed against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia.

3: We are at about the first part or winter of the year 58 A.D when Paul arrives at Corinth. This three-month stay was a positive experience for Paul for the most part. He spent time there and at Cenchrea and perhaps even at Athens (as he came to and from Corinth). From Corinth or Cenchrea Paul wrote a letter to the Church at Rome, dictating it to an amanuensis, in this case Tertius (Romans 16:22) as was his custom. Romans is one of the finest theological works of the New Testament, seconded only by Galatians and Hebrews. His dear friends Aquila and Priscilla are there in Rome. Paul greatly desired to visit them and the church but had to settle for a letter. In it are the familiar challenges of reconciling the views of Jew and Gentile regarding how one stands righteously before God. In his closing, Paul makes note of his desire to come to them by way of Spain; the collection for the poor in Jerusalem; and his desire to go there first to deliver it before coming to Rome. He hints that they might think about gathering funds for Jerusalem also (Romans 15:23-27)⁴⁹. Tertius, who wrote the letter at Paul's direction adds his own greeting in 16:22. Nothing else is known about this believer and helper to Paul in the church at Corinth (or Cenchrea). He is never mentioned again in the New Testament.

While in Corinth, Paul received the collection for the poor at Jerusalem (Romans 15:26; I Cor. 16:1 and footnote 32). The plot by the Jews could not be executed in Corinth. They had apparently planned to seize Paul either at the port at Cenchrea or more likely aboard ship, possibly throwing him overboard after an "accidental" rap on the head. So Paul decided to share the company of his friends back through Macedonia instead.

20:4-5

4: And he was accompanied by Sopater of Berea, *the son* of Pyrrhus, and by Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia. 5: But these had gone on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas.

4-5: These who accompanied Paul, did so all the way to Troas and perhaps most or perhaps all of them went with him even to Jerusalem. When they got to Philippi once again, Luke rejoined Paul. The rest of the party continued on to Troas while Paul stayed in Philippi for Passover and Unleavened Bread. Sopater is probably "Sosipater" of Romans 16:21. Nothing else is known of Secundus of Berea. Tychicus and Trophimus are from Ephesus and accompany Paul full time now.⁵⁰ Along with Gaius (of Derbe) and Timothy, they are probably Gentiles and had no reason to

⁴⁹ This is the second collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem (Acts 11:29-30).

stay at Philippi. This is the last mention of Timothy in Acts, but he was involved with Paul and loved by Paul throughout his remaining years of service.⁵¹

20:6-12

6: We sailed from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and came to them at Troas within five days; and there we stayed seven days. 7: On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul *began* talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight. 8: There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered together. 9: And there was a young man named Eutychus sitting on the window sill, sinking into a deep sleep; and as Paul kept on talking, he was overcome by sleep and fell down from the third floor and was picked up dead. 10: But Paul went down and fell upon him, and after embracing him, he said, "Do not be troubled, for his life is in him." 11: When he had gone *back* up and had broken the bread and eaten, he talked with them a long while until daybreak, and then left. 12: They took away the boy alive, and were greatly comforted."

6: Luke now joins Paul (the "we" passages commence once again) and sailed to Troas. It took twice as long as going the other way due to currents and wind conditions in that part of the Aegean. 7: "On the first day of the week"...Sunday, the first time in Acts this day of the week has been noted as a day of assembly. But in Paul's letter to Corinth (I Corinthians 16:2) it appears that assembling on the "first day of the week" had become customary. This may simply be due to the need to gather on a day that did not conflict with the Jewish assembly on the Sabbath, as well as assembling on Christ's day of resurrection. This "breaking of bread" at Troas was likely the evening meal. Paul's "message" included all of his travels and news of what God had been doing in Macedonia and Achaia as well as addressing matters pertaining to their faith and walk in the Lord. Because Paul intended to leave the next day so he could be in Jerusalem by Pentecost, time was tight. He only had about five or six weeks to get there. So he prolonged his message.

8-9: At night in Troas at that time of year, the outside weather was cool, and the interior was not only lit by torches for light, but also for warmth. The smoke of these lamps exited out of windows ("small doors" in the Greek) situated around the room, normally covered with a lattice. As Paul continued on until midnight, a young man named Eutychus, sitting on the sill of one of these windows fell asleep. Perhaps the warmth as well as the smoke from the torches assisted in his drowsiness since Luke makes this unusual and unnecessary note suggesting a cause for Eutychus dilemma. He fell either through the lattice,⁵² or, if the lattice was open, out the window from the

⁵⁰ They are Paul's traveling companions and ministers to him from this time until the end of Paul's life. Note: Acts 21:29; Ephesians 6:21-22; Colossians 4:7-8; II Timothy 4:12, and 20). Jamieson, Fausett and Brown note: "From the mention of the places to which each of these companions belonged, and still more the order in which they occur, we are left to conclude that they were deputies from their respective churches, charged with taking up and bringing on the collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem, first at Berea, next at Thessalonica, then at Philippi [HOWSON], where we gather that our historian himself rejoined the party (from the resumption at [Act 20:5](#) of the "us," dropped at [Act 16:17](#)), by whom the Philippian collection would naturally be brought on."

⁵¹ Timothy is found to be with Paul in Rome during his first imprisonment there and is mentioned in Philippians and Colossians which were written from Rome during Paul's first imprisonment under house arrest. (Acts 28:30-31) Afterward, Paul traveled through Macedonia and onto Asia, leaving Trophimus ill at Miletus (II Tim. 4:20).

⁵² "Lattice" A crossing of wood or metal bars on the outside of a window. Some could be opened on hinges, others were permanently affixed. They were commonly used to keep out birds and intruders.

third floor to the ground. Many rushed down to see the young man and picked him up only to discover he was dead.

10: When Paul arrived, he had the Eutychus placed on a flat surface and laid down upon him and gripped him firmly⁵³ much in the manner of Elijah (I Kings 17:21) and Elisha (II Kings 4:34). He soon exclaimed to the mourners that the man was still alive. Many commentaries debate whether the lad actually died or was in some sort of a “swoon”. Though the language does not explicitly say that Paul’s action raised the boy from the dead, there would be little significance to Luke including this story in his history if indeed the boy had not been killed in the fall.

11-12: After this near tragedy, Paul and the company continued on until daybreak, as if nothing had happened. The boy either was there with them until Paul dismissed the assembly, or was taken away after he was found to be alive. In any case, the boy’s companions were comforted and encouraged (“para-ka-leh-oh” again).

20:13-16

13: But we, going ahead to the ship, set sail for Assos, intending from there to take Paul on board; for so he had arranged it, intending himself to go by land. 14: And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and came to Mitylene. 15: Sailing from there, we arrived the following day opposite Chios; and the next day we crossed over to Samos; and the day following we came to Miletus. 16: For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be in Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost.

13-14: Sailing South from Troas involves tacking against the wind and sea currents. Square masted ships are not good at this and so a zig-zag pattern is required to do so. Paul made the trip from Troas to Assos by land, while the others went by sea, - except those who would have accompanied Paul, like Aristarchus and Gaius. By sea the trip was a full day, some fifty miles. Walking by land, only twenty-five miles was needed to get to Assos, easily done in a day over the paved Roman road. The reason for Paul’s choice to travel by land is unknown and speculation could consider such things as: 1. Being weary of the sea after three shipwrecks already. 2. Perhaps taking advantage of the “open door to ministry” presented to him in Troas on his way to Macedonia. 2. Most likely, just wanting to be alone for a spell and enjoy solitude. It looks as if (from what follows) that this little journey for Paul had an impact. How long Paul took to get to Assos is not exactly known, but it appears he met them at the same ship in which they arrived and joined them on board, so the trip was brief. Once the ship departed the mainland, they sailed some thirty-five miles down to Mytilene, the capital and major seaport on the southeast side of the island of Lesbos. It was an agonizingly slow trip for a man in a hurry.

15-16: From there another forty miles to the harbor opposite Chios and then another seventy miles to the important island of Samos, either making better time or enduring more hours on board. The next day they made Miletus, a trip of about thirty nautical miles, avoiding changing ships at Samos in order to go to Ephesus. His reticence to go to Ephesus was more than a desire to avoid the time he would spend there visiting the Elders. In fact, it may have been faster if he had gone to Ephesus as it took days for the elders to meet him at Miletus. More likely, it was to avoid being seized by

⁵³ As the Greek indicates.

the Jews there.⁵⁴ Miletus was the ancient capital of Ionia and near the Meander River. Ephesus had eclipsed its importance and now Miletus was a “suburb” of the great city. Paul probably had intended to be in Jerusalem for Passover and Unleavened Bread (19:21). But the plot of the Jews at Cenchrea sidetracked him. Now, he had only a little over a month to make it to Jerusalem for Pentecost.⁵⁵ This was ambitious considering the slowness of travel in those days.

20:17-21

17: From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church. 18: And when they had come to him, he said to them, "You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time, 19: serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews; 20: how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house, 21: solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

17: Paul sent for these leaders and it would have taken no less than two and likely three days for them to arrive at Miletus. The word “Elders” is the Greek “πρεσβυτερος” (“pres-bu-ter-os”). It means “men of age” or “older men”. The men are also called “overseers of the flock” (verse 28). This follows Jewish practice of establishing leadership through men who have gained wisdom through experience in both spiritual matters and life practices.

18-21: All one sentence. Paul recalls his commitment of service to them in an emotional and solemn message. Things are said that suggest finality to Paul’s fellowship with them. His open declaration of his service, commitment and suffering are said in a way indicating he expects no less from them as difficult days await them. He had already encouraged and exhorted them when he left Ephesus for Macedonia some six months ago (20:1).

19: Paul mentions his “tears” here as the sadness in seeing the hard hearts and plots of his “kinsmen according to the flesh” deeply affecting him (Note: Romans 9:1-5). He mentions them again in verse 31, and in his letter to Corinth (II Cor.2:4) and in his letter to Philippi (3:18). He was a deeply emotional man as well as a deeply intellectual man - like Jesus, a man of sorrows acquainted with grief.

20: Rather than teach from a secluded place, he taught openly, even from house to house.

21: “Repentance toward God...” Paul’s goal was to turn the minds of his hearers from false or misguided beliefs to the truth. Their “repentance” would be to acknowledge their errors and move their faith from these false and misguided beliefs to Christ.

20:22-25

22-25: "And now, behold, bound by the Spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, 23: except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city,

⁵⁴ See: 21:27 and 20:19

⁵⁵ Paul’s eagerness to be in Jerusalem by Pentecost may have been due to the nature of the festival as a celebration of the “first fruits” of the harvest, paralleling his bringing the “offering” as a symbol of the God’s first fruits in His harvest of souls.

saying that bonds and afflictions await me. 24: "But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God. 25: "And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will no longer see my face.

22: Not in opposition to the Spirit as some think, but because of the mandate of the Spirit. When did he receive this leading? Could it have been on that solitary walk from Troas to Assos? Whenever it occurred it left him with the impression that he was headed for something dreary and he became depressed and emotionally moribund over it. He says here that he does not know what will happen to him in Jerusalem, but in verses 23-25 he seems suddenly clear about it. He talks of the finishing of the ministry given to him by the Lord. Verse 25 is a revelation both to Paul and to his hearers. He says he will never see them again.⁵⁶

23: "Solemnly testifies" ...the same term as in verses 21 and 24. It means with solemnity, seriousness and earnestness in one's message.

24: More important than his own life and anything he could do, gain or benefit from. His mission and message was a life and death matter for the world.

20:26-27

26: "Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. 27: "For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.

26-27: Because Paul had taught the "whole purpose (or counsel) of God"; the eternal fate of the people was upon their own heads (please note Acts 18:6). He is clear regarding the judgment they will face.

20:28-35

28: "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. 29: "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30: and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. 31: "Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears. 32: "And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build *you* up and to give *you* the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. 33: "I have coveted no one's silver or gold or clothes. 34: "You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my *own* needs and to the men who were with me. 35: "In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

⁵⁶ Yet, there may be some evidence that he did get back there. If one understands that Paul was in Rome twice (once in his own rented quarters (Acts 28:30-31) and later again in prison in chains, then the references to Paul's ministry between these imprisonments and his letters from both experiences allow for a number of visits here and there including Ephesus. Note for example in the "prison and pastoral epistles" written later in Paul's life the following comments in: Philippians 2:24; Philemon 1:22; I Timothy 1:3, 3:14, 4:13; II Timothy 4:13, 20; Titus 1:5; as well as Romans 15:24 and 28.

28: He has given the title “overseer” and “pastor” (shepherd) to these elderly leaders of the church at Ephesus. As such, they were to protect and guard the “flock” of God with their own lives if necessary, since the Chief Shepherd gave His life for them. These men bore the threefold title and the responsibility.⁵⁷

29-30: “Wolves”. Jesus referred to false prophets as “wolves” (note: Matthew 7:15 and 10:16). Two types of wolves would ultimately attack the flock of God, the Judaisers and the Gnostics, both of which Paul and the apostles (especially John) wrote against. Ephesus, like most Greco-Roman cities were vulnerable to very persuasive teachers representing all sorts of religions. The difficulty was that both Judaisers and Gnostics had learned teachers who were Jewish. This could be difficult for a church that was basically Jewish at its core.

31: In other words, “Do not forget what I taught you and the price I paid to do it. Don’t take it lightly as if it were not the complete truth”. Remember, they had no New Testament with which to refer.

32: Paul must trust them to God’s hands. What else could he do? Later, he would write several letters to the churches in and about Ephesus. “Build you up”...(like constructing a building). “Those who are sanctified”. This term has become Christian jargon. The Greek word is also translated “holy” but means being separated to God by their faith in Christ. This is something God has done for them in response to their faith in Christ.⁵⁸

33-35: Paul’s enemies used every ploy possible to discredit him including accusing him of raising the collection for his own use. His apparel made it clear that he was not attempting to gain wealth by his ministry. Fine clothes indicated personal wealth. Paul’s clothes were old and worn. On the contrary, (as we have seen) Paul often worked hard at labor to provide for himself and others, and was reluctant to receive any personal support at all. He led by example in this and expected the example to be imitated. Paul quotes Jesus’ words, “It is more blessed to give than to receive”, words not found in the gospels giving us the distinct idea that much of what Jesus said and did is lost to us. (Note: John 21:25 for example)

20:36-38

36: When he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. 37: And they *began* to weep aloud and embraced Paul, and repeatedly kissed him, 38: grieving especially over the word which he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they were accompanying him to the ship.

36-38: From Jamieson, Fausset and Brown,⁵⁹ “--Nothing can be more touching than these three

⁵⁷ Paul does not differentiate between the “blood” of God, the “blood” of Jesus or the “blood” of The Holy Spirit. The subject of the reference to blood is “God”. But since God does not have blood as such, the reference can only be referring to Jesus, who shed His blood for the church. Paul is making a simple declaration of the deity of Christ.

⁵⁸ Often one hears that one is to “sanctify him or herself”. This is to set ones life apart from everything else in worship and service to God. Those who teach this concept almost always degrade God’s grace into some sort of “works” righteousness. It is God and the word of His grace that will see the believer provided both with being built up and sharing the inheritance with the “saints”.⁵⁸ The idea of “sanctifying oneself” is not found in the New Testament and only once in the Old for a specific purpose.

concluding verses, leaving an indelible impression of rare ministerial fidelity and affection on the apostle's part, and of warm admiration and attachment on the part of these Ephesian presbyters. Would to God that such scenes were more frequent in the Church!" (Note also: Acts 21:5)

Chapter Twenty-one

21:1-4

1: When we had parted from them and had set sail, we ran a straight course to Cos and the next day to Rhodes and from there to Patara; 2: and having found a ship crossing over to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set sail. 3: When we came in sight of Cyprus, leaving it on the left, we kept sailing to Syria and landed at Tyre; for there the ship was to unload its cargo. 4: After looking up the disciples, we stayed there seven days; and they kept telling Paul through the Spirit not to set foot in Jerusalem.

1: "...a straight course to Cos". This note reveals that the wind became favorable and that tacking was unnecessary as they were "running before the wind" and making good time. (16:11). Cos is about 40 miles due south of Miletus, an island about eight miles offshore. Passing Patmos on their starboard side (Patmos is yet to become famous by John's exile there), they spent the night and then sailed to Rhodes the next morning, a trip of fifty miles. Rhodes was called the, "Island of Roses" and they grew luxuriantly on the sunny island. Famous for the great Colossus, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, Paul's troop did not see it as it had collapsed by this time. The island was at the entrance to the Aegean Sea and an important center of commerce. It also boasted of a great university. From Rhodes, they sailed to Patara, some forty miles on the coast of Lycia. Located on the Xanthus River, it once boasted of its own temple of Apollo and an oracle rival to that at Delphi. Hundreds of ships stopped there seasonally.

2: At Patara, the troop changed ships selecting a large vessel for a direct trip to Phoenicia (Syria). This trip of some four hundred miles would take about five days if the winds were favorable. They would be under sail full time and passengers would probably sleep on deck.

3: On the way they passed Cyprus on the port side of the ship and later landed at Tyre in Syria. It is difficult to know if Paul made it in time for Pentecost at Jerusalem in that, from this point on, he is in no hurry whatsoever. Either he arrived in Syria three weeks before Pentecost or knew he could not make it after all. From the travel time expected, he probably had three weeks to get to Jerusalem.

4: Paul stayed a full week in Tyre, meeting with disciples there. How did Tyre come to have an assembly of believers? Acts 11:19 gives us the answer. The fact that these believers were there was already known to Paul, but he had not visited them. There was much to discuss. Through these disciples came a warning to Paul not to go to Jerusalem. But Paul was already aware of this warning by the Spirit (20:22-23). Paul is now caught between two promptings. His decision is to forge on ahead to Jerusalem. He has made it clear and will do so again that his life is of no

⁵⁹ Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary. Standing, kneeling and falling prostrate all seem to be proper ways in which to pray. The attitude of the heart is to be in a place of submission to God as Lord and King.

consequence in light of his mission.

21:5-14,

5: When our days there were ended, we left and started on our journey, while they all, with wives and children, escorted us until *we were* out of the city. After kneeling down on the beach and praying, we said farewell to one another. 6: Then we went on board the ship, and they returned home again. 7: When we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais, and after greeting the brethren, we stayed with them for a day. 8: On the next day we left and came to Caesarea, and entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him. 9: Now this man had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses. 10: As we were staying there for some days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. 11: And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands, and said, "This is what the Holy Spirit says: 'In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'" 12: When we had heard this, we as well as the local residents *began* begging him not to go up to Jerusalem. 13: Then Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." 14: And since he would not be persuaded, we fell silent, remarking, "The will of the Lord be done!"

5: "...days there were ended..." This phrase is unusual and only used twice in the New Testament. It means "accomplished fully". This could indicate that the seven days (a perfect number) found full accomplishment or, all that needed to be done was accomplished fully (or perfectly) in seven days. From wherever they stayed in Tyre they, along with the families of believers there, journeyed to the edge of town on the coast near the shipping port. There they prayed, kneeling down on the beach, and then bid farewell to one another.

6: The families stayed there until the ship sailed. Luke's report of this tells us how much he was touched and moved by their fellow believers at Tyre. Very possibly Paul had told them as well that he would not see them again. If so, this was to be. He never was able to go there again.

7: The trip from Tyre to Ptolemais was only about thirty-five miles by sea, half way to Caesarea. This is the modern city of Acco (or Acre), across the bay north of Mt. Carmel. They used a local or smaller shipping company. They met with brethren there and spent the day with them heading out again the next morning.

8: "Caesarea" (see note on 10:1). Philip is called "the evangelist" from the Greek "εὐαγγελιστής" ("ef-an-gel-is-tays"). "Evangelist" is a direct transliteration of this Greek term and means "bringer of good news". He has already come to fame in this role as others describe him by this term and he is one of the original seven (Acts 6). It has now been about twenty years since he was chosen as one of the seven servants (deacons). No doubt Luke received a great deal of information from Philip for his journal as they all stayed there for a length of time (verse 10).

9-10: This verse indicates that Philip's four daughters had dedicated themselves solely to the calling they had received and were intending to remain unmarried (Note: I Corinthians 7:25-35). As prophetesses, they followed a long tradition.⁶⁰ Agabus was also gifted this way. But the gift of

⁶⁰ See: Exodus 15:20; Judges 4:4; II Kings 22:14; Nehemiah 6:14; Luke 2:36, I Corinthians 11:5 and 12:8-10.

prophecy was not limited to men. This gift consisted of understanding with wisdom the discernment of present times then presenting God's action. God's response or action would be based on the decisions made by people regarding the times in which they lived. In that way, the view of the future is not "fortune telling", but truth based in the will and word of God. This "gift" was not a personal attribute, but a "manifestation of the Spirit" through a person for a specific occasion.⁶¹ Agabus had ministered at the church at Antioch of Syria years earlier (Acts 11:27-29)

11-12: Agabus' announcement was accepted as the word of God by all including Luke and Paul's traveling companions. Although there was no command not to go to Jerusalem, Paul had set his face there, just as Jesus had done years ago. The affection of people for Paul is seen time and time again.

13: There was no dissuading this man of God. Though his heart was broken at their affection for him, he repeats the expressed goal and purpose of his life once again. His determination to finish his responsibilities raises Paul to a heroic level. It also demonstrates how real Jesus is to him and testifies to the truth of Paul's encounter with the risen Lord.

14: Robertson says it well, "Here is a quaint naiveté in this confession by the friends of Paul. Since Paul would not let them have their way, they were willing for the Lord to have his way, acquiescence after failure to have theirs."⁶²

21:15-26

15: After these days we got ready and started on our way up to Jerusalem. 16: *Some* of the disciples from Caesarea also came with us, taking us to Mnason of Cyprus, a disciple of long standing with whom we were to lodge. 17: After we arrived in Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. 18: And the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. 19: After he had greeted them, he *began* to relate one by one the things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. 20: And when they heard it they *began* glorifying God; and they said to him, "You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed, and they are all zealous for the Law; 21: and they have been told about you, that you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs. 22: "What, then, is *to be done*? They will certainly hear that you have come. 23: "Therefore do this that we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow; 24: take them and purify yourself along with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads; and all will know that there is nothing to the things which they have been told about you, but that you yourself also walk orderly, keeping the Law. 25: "But concerning the Gentiles who have believed, we wrote, having decided that they should abstain from meat sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication." 26: Then Paul took the men, and the next day, purifying himself along with them, went into the temple giving notice of the completion of the days of purification, until the sacrifice was offered for each one of them.

15-16: "We got ready" literally "packed our bags" or "saddlebags". Verse 16 seems to suggest that this Mnason would lodge them somewhere on their way to Jerusalem. It was about a sixty-five to seventy-mile trip and they would need a place to stay on the way. By land and on foot this would

⁶¹ See this author's work entitled, "A Brief Word Study Concerning The Gifts Of The Holy Spirit"

⁶² "Word Pictures in The New Testament" Volume III, A. T. Robertson, Harper and Brothers, 1931

be a week. By horse two days. Mnason was a disciple of “long standing”. This means he had been a believer for a long time and was highly regarded. Though originally from Cyprus, he now resided in a village somewhere between Caesarea and Jerusalem. It may have been Antipatris⁶³.

The entourage was now quite large. With Paul is Luke, Timothy, Trophimus, Aristarchus and Gaius, probably Tychicus and we don't know about Sopater and Secundus. These men accompanied Paul for several reasons. One would be to guard the large offering being delivered to Jerusalem. Another would be to assist Paul in personal ways due to his infirm condition. Others there are assistants to Paul in ministry and writing and Luke was completing his journal. In addition, we have men from Caesarea tagging along. Mnason may have been a man of some means in order to host this many people overnight.

17: “The brethren”. Were they still meeting at Mary's house? This term would include both men and women. “Gladly” is “with great pleasure”, “happily”. Had they been told by courier that Paul was coming? Couriers did exist in these days to bring important messages, letters, documents to a destination or give advance notices of the impending arrival of a dignitary or important person.

18: “Paul went in with us”... indicating that the entourage had business with the church leadership apart from Paul. This would be, of course, the delivering of the offering that had been collected over many years of ministry (See: footnote 34). No doubt these men had been informed of the arrival of Paul and his companions. Their meeting probably took place at the house of James. “All the Elders were present”. The other apostles are not mentioned and are likely on ministry mission near or far away, or perhaps elected not to be in the meeting. The “Elders” would be the responsible leaders of the flock (See: comment on 20:17)

19: “After greeting them”. The Greek indicates a time of embracing of one another. This greeting would also include introductions all around. After all were made comfortable, Paul launched into an exciting, lengthy and detailed (“one by one”) account of the last missionary journey covering some four and a half to five years since Paul had last been in Jerusalem. He especially focused in on what God had done among the Gentiles. Luke was taking notes. It is now May of 58 A.D. Paul had made it in time for Pentecost (verse 27).

20: The response of James and the Elders, and (possibly those men from Caesarea) was to glorify God. In light of this account, James and the Elders began to relate what had transpired in Jerusalem while Paul was away. “Thousands” is literally “myriads” or “ten thousand”, a hyperbole to emphasize the number of believers. Paul's return to Jerusalem was a major concern for James and the church leadership because of the disturbance that would surely occur when his presence in Jerusalem became known. The issue is so pressing on James that there is no mention of the offering or of any other matter. James' anxiety over the relationship between the Jewish Christians and the non-Christian Jews is heightened by Paul's arrival. This had to be a wet blanket, dampening the high spirits of Paul and the others, as they had presented the offering (first fruits of the harvest), especially considering the risk Paul had taken in coming there in the first place.⁶⁴

21: Paul has a history of stirring up the situation in Jerusalem (9:26-31; 15:1-5). The Jews who had believed in Christ as well as those who had not were jealous for the Law. The issue of adherence to the law had been settled at the Jerusalem conference (Acts 15) in terms of the Gentiles, but not clarified in Jerusalem regarding Jewish believers. No instruction had been forthcoming clarifying

⁶³ Note comment at 23:31-32.

⁶⁴ Note: 24:17 for Paul's explanation as to why he wished to come to Jerusalem.

for Jewish believers the observance of all the laws and traditions and the meaning of doing so if they wished. This was, of course, the fault of James and the elders who failed to teach the provisions of the New Covenant to the Jews who had believed. Perhaps these leaders didn't have a clear understanding or were afraid of the repercussions.

Word of Paul's ministry to the Gentiles and his consistent message to the Jews in their midst and had become known to the Jews in Jerusalem. To the new believers they were attempting to discredit Paul and his message through half-truths and distortions. Paul had already circumcised Timothy to avoid an uproar by offending the Jews (16:3). For Paul, circumcision or no circumcision meant nothing (Galatians 5:6). Paul had already written Galatians, I Corinthians and Romans making the position of faith clear. So he must have rolled his eyes at this announcement. Still, his patience and understanding are demonstrated in the midst of this tense situation. What should he do?

22: That was the question of James and the elders, "What then is to be done?" Note the apprehension in their voices when they say, "They will certainly hear you have come!" They knew Paul's visit created a powder keg ready to ignite and they also knew of his stubborn determination regarding the truth of his position and message. So, they had already formed a strategy.

23: This strategy, they hoped, would not ignite the powder keg. Paul is being commanded to do something he might otherwise refuse to do. The four men under a vow have incurred some sort of violation to their vow that has made them unclean.⁶⁵ It almost sounds as if this was a deliberate act in order to facilitate the strategy already formed by James and the elders.

24: Their instruction to Paul was that he should take these men and go through the ritual of purification with them that would include Paul's paying for the expense of the sacrifice on their and his own behalf, (a considerable sum) thus demonstrating his piety and compassion for these men before the on-looking Jews. This was to occur seven days after their defilement, the head being shaved. Then they were to continue their vow until completion. Paul was to participate with these men.

25: James and the elders reassured Paul that they would not impose such matters upon the Gentile believers, but for the sake of the situation in Jerusalem, they needed his compliance.

26: Thinking it through, Paul opted for compliance. As none of this related to attaining righteousness before God or to the faith bringing about salvation but only to managing the vows the men had taken, Paul decided to comply. It was ritual only and Paul already knew that to win some, he had to "become as a Jew..."⁶⁶ Still, on the one hand, it must have rankled Paul that the Apostles were so weak, fearful and ignorant. On the other hand, he had to maintain his relationship with them and help them maintain some semblance of order in the city. He apparently did this day after day until all five of them were in compliance with the law of purification regarding vows.

⁶⁵ See Numbers 6:1-21 regarding the "Nazirite" vow.

⁶⁶ I Corinthians 9:19-23, "For though I am free from all *men*, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more. To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law; to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some. I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it.

27: When the seven days were almost over, the Jews from Asia, upon seeing him in the temple, *began* to stir up all the crowd and laid hands on him, 28: crying out, "Men of Israel, come to our aid! This is the man who preaches to all men everywhere against our people and the Law and this place; and besides he has even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place." 29: For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with him, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple. 30: Then all the city was provoked, and the people rushed together, and taking hold of Paul they dragged him out of the temple, and immediately the doors were shut. 31: While they were seeking to kill him, a report came up to the commander of the *Roman* cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion. 32: At once he took along *some* soldiers and centurions and ran down to them; and when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.

27: "Seven days" required for the purification process to be completed. "Jews from Asia" there for the festival having knowledge of Paul from their experience in Ephesus (20:19). As Paul was going to and from the temple in compliance with the mandate of James and the elders so that the Jews would be placated, Jews from Ephesus had spotted him in the city with Trophimus (a Gentile), and when Paul entered the temple grounds seized him, and began to negate the whole effort through their rhetoric.

28-29: They appealed to the Jews to support them in the effort to quash Paul once and for all. Their shouting was, as usual, filled with lies and distortions especially regarding bringing Greeks into the temple (the Court of Israel), the worst of his "offenses" though there is no evidence Paul ever did this. Stone markers around the Court of Israel (some still existing today in museums) warned of the penalty of death to any Gentile crossing the boundary. Their accusations against Paul are the same as those used against Stephen (6:13) with which Paul (Saul) agreed over twenty years ago.⁶⁷

30: "provoked" – the Greek word is "κινεω" ("Ki-neh-oh") from which we get "kinetic" meaning to cause "movement" or "action". Thus, there was a "running together" of the people (inside the Court of Israel) and Paul was "dragged" or pulled along out of the temple grounds and the doors (or gates) between the Court of Israel (the women's section) and the Court of the Gentiles were slammed shut. Beginning with this verse and throughout the remainder of the book, Luke becomes very detailed. The impression is that word of Paul's plight had reached the disciples, and Luke begins to write from personal observation.

31-32: "They were seeking to kill him...". Some authority figure among the Jews authorized Paul to be "beaten" (verse 32). This beating would probably be done with a club, stick or rod while Paul was held. The intention was to cause fatal injuries to Paul and all would be ignorant when the Roman inquiry was held. However, word had quickly gotten to the Roman commander, and gathering both centurions and soldiers, he rushed to the scene. When the Jews saw the approach of the Romans, they ceased their beating of Paul. To kill anyone outside of Roman authority was unlawful and punishable by death. This "commander" was Claudius Lysias (23:26). He was stationed at the Antonia fortress and was a "Chiliarch" or commander of a thousand (a regiment)⁶⁸. Under his command would be ten centurions each commanding a hundred troops. He brought no

⁶⁷ The entire episode is strikingly similar to the "Stephen" event except Paul is now in Stephen's shoes.

⁶⁸ This means he commanded one or more "cohorts" of 600 men each plus cavalry. See footnote at 27:1.

less than two hundred men with him.⁶⁹ The Antonia fortress is at the northwest corner of the temple grounds.

21:33-40

33: Then the commander came up and took hold of him, and ordered him to be bound with two chains; and he *began* asking who he was and what he had done. 34: But among the crowd some were shouting one thing *and* some another, and when he could not find out the facts because of the uproar, he ordered him to be brought into the barracks. 35: When he got to the stairs, he was carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob; 36: for the multitude of the people kept following them, shouting, "Away with him!" 37: As Paul was about to be brought into the barracks, he said to the commander, "May I say something to you?" And he **said*, "Do you know Greek? 38: "Then you are not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand men of the Assassins out into the wilderness?" 39: But Paul said, "I am a Jew of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no insignificant city; and I beg you, allow me to speak to the people." 40: When he had given him permission, Paul, standing on the stairs, motioned to the people with his hand; and when there was a great hush, he spoke to them in the Hebrew dialect, saying,

33: "Two chains" suggests Paul was chained by the wrist to two soldiers, one on each side. Lysias may have thought Paul to be the leader of a group of violent or seditious assassins or the like (verse 38). Lysias' inexperience with Jewish matters, unlike many Roman officials we have seen so far, is apparent as this episode unfolds.

34-36: Paul was carried by the soldiers as a means of protective custody.

37-39: The "barracks" were below the Antonia fortress. The fortress was connected to the northwestern end of the temple area by two flights of steps. The tower overlooked the temple grounds. Paul surprised the commander by speaking to him in Greek. Immediately the commander knew his assumption about Paul was incorrect.⁷⁰

40: After the clarification about Paul's identity, the commander and allowed him to address the crowd. Paul, still chained between two soldiers, raised his hand hushing the crowd, began to address the Jews in Hebrew (possibly Aramaic). He stood on the steps that led to the tower overlooking the temple grounds.

⁶⁹ The account begs the question, "Where were James and the Elders at this time or anytime during the ensuing trials of Paul? James is never mentioned again in Acts or in any of Paul's writings outside of Galatians. In Galatians, Paul's view of James is less than complimentary (2:6-9). It is not as if James and the elders had thrown Paul to the Jews, but were likely thinking the idea would also protect them. They didn't anticipate the "Asian Jews" and any interference may have made it extremely difficult on the Jerusalem Christians. We give them the benefit of the doubt.

⁷⁰ Josephus apparently mentions this same Egyptian in "Wars of The Jews", II.13.5

Chapter Twenty-two

22:1-5

1: "Brethren and fathers, hear my defense which I now *offer* to you." 2: And when they heard that he was addressing them in the Hebrew dialect, they became even more quiet; and he said, 3: "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God just as you all are today. 4: "I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons, 5: as also the high priest and all the Council of the elders can testify. From them I also received letters to the brethren, and started off for Damascus in order to bring even those who were there to Jerusalem as prisoners to be punished.

1-5: Luke records this with detail, and we may assume he was present. Paul attempts to remind the Jews of who he is. But it has been over twenty years since his fierce reputation was so well known and many of the Jews present (especially those from Ephesus) would not have remembrance of his former reputation. So he calls the High Priest and council of elders as witnesses of this fact. He calls the following of Jesus the Christ "this Way". Paul does not address the crowd in his typical fashion. In fact, he takes a totally different tact. Instead of explaining how Jesus fulfills the promises of God from long ago, he simply speaks about his personal experiences. His effort is to win the Jews in a personal and cordial address.

22:6-9

6: "But it happened that as I was on my way, approaching Damascus about noontime, a very bright light suddenly flashed from heaven all around me, 7: and I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' 8: "And I answered, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said to me, 'I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are persecuting.' 9: "And those who were with me saw the light, to be sure, but did not understand the voice of the One who was speaking to me".

6-9: Paul recounts his "Road to Damascus" experience (see notes on (9:3-7). Some commentators or critics try to make the accounts of Paul's conversion experience appear contradictory. For example, Acts 9:7 reads, "The men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one". By this comparison, some try to assert that the men accompanying Paul are seen having different experiences. But the texts simply describe the experience using different terms and there is no actual contradiction.

22:10-20

10: "And I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Get up and go on into Damascus, and there you will be told of all that has been appointed for you to do.' 11: "But since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me and came into Damascus. 12: "A certain Ananias, a man who was devout by the standard of the Law, *and* well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, 13: came to me, and standing near said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight!' And at that very time I looked up at him. 14: "And he said, 'The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear an utterance from His mouth. 15: 'For you will be a witness for

Him to all men of what you have seen and heard. 16: 'Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.' 17: "It happened when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I fell into a trance, 18: and I saw Him saying to me, 'Make haste, and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about Me.' 19: "And I said, 'Lord, they themselves understand that in one synagogue after another I used to imprison and beat those who believed in You. 20: 'And when the blood of Your witness Stephen was being shed, I also was standing by approving, and watching out for the coats of those who were slaying him.'

10-16: Paul continues his explanation and notes here that Ananias was a devout Jew well respected in Damascus. This was to no doubt persuade his accusers that not all Jews were opposed to his belief in Jesus as the Messiah, and quotes Ananias more extensively than is recorded in 9:17.

17-20: Here is an additional piece of information not recorded in 9:26-29. The “trance” Paul speaks of is the Greek word “ecstasy” from the two words “out of” and “stand”. It means to be mentally displaced from where one is standing to another place. Paul’s response to the Lord questions why the Lord would say that the Jews would not accept Paul’s conversion experience as truth considering who he was and what he had done in their presence. Paul’s conversion and subsequent life of ministry still stands as a forceful testimony to Paul genuinely being confronted by the risen Christ.

22:21-22

21: "And He said to me, 'Go! For I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'" 22: They listened to him up to this statement, and *then* they raised their voices and said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he should not be allowed to live!" 23; And as they were crying out and throwing off their cloaks and tossing dust into the air,

21-23: Paul’s audience hear Paul recount the Lord’s instructions and get the message that they, the Jews, are either unworthy or unwilling to hear the truth and then Paul utters the offending phrase bringing their minds back to why they seized him in the first place. One would think he might quote a few of the scriptures regarding God’s intention to bring light and salvation to the Gentiles prior to this moment. But the deed is done. To think that the Lord would state that “His people” are not open to the truth but the Gentiles are is the actual offending comment, not to mention the reminder that Paul was accused of bringing a “Gentile” beyond the limit in the temple grounds.. Denying that what Paul spoke to be the truth, they went through the motions as those having heard blasphemy, calling for his execution.

22:24-28

24: the commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks, stating that he should be examined by scourging so that he might find out the reason why they were shouting against him that way. 25: But when they stretched him out with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who was standing by, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman and un-condemned?" 26: When the centurion heard *this*, he went to the commander and told him, saying, "What are you about to do? For this man is a Roman." 27: The commander came and said to him, "Tell me, are you a Roman?" And he said, "Yes." 28: The commander answered, "I acquired this citizenship with a large sum of money." And Paul said, "But I was actually born *a citizen*."

24-28: This passage reveals that the commander had no idea what was going on or why. To obtain information, Paul was given over to a Centurion who bent him over a post and tied his hands there with thongs in order to beat him with a flagellum.⁷¹ Paul, recognizing the method of the beating was illegal for Roman citizens announced his citizenship. The Centurion brought Paul to the commander and the inquiry ensued.

Lysias' citizenship was purchased with a large sum of money, probably during the reign of Claudius and he may have adopted the emperor's name, a common custom. Early in Claudius' reign, under the influence of his wife Messalina, citizenship was sold for large sums of money. This was not the general rule. Citizenship could be granted for some service to the empire. There is speculation that Paul's parents may have been awarded citizenship through service to Mark Antony when he was in either Palestine or Tarsus⁷².

22:29-30

29: Therefore those who were about to examine him immediately let go of him; and the commander also was afraid when he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had put him in chains. 30: But on the next day, wishing to know for certain why he had been accused by the Jews, he released him and ordered the chief priests and all the Council to assemble, and brought Paul down and set him before them.

29: Those assigned to "examine" Paul, upon hearing that he was a Roman citizen, immediately let go of him and the commander became afraid due to his chaining and treatment of Paul. The cause for his fear would be that a compliant by Paul to the higher Roman authorities would result in a severe reprimand if not a like beating or dismissal.

30: The commander was at a loss. His inexperience with Jewish matters is evident. He insists on finding out what the complaint is from the Jews. He does this by calling for an assembly, apparently on his own turf at Antonia.

Chapter Twenty-three

23:1-5

1: Paul, looking intently at the Council, said, "Brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day." 2: The high priest Ananias commanded those standing beside him to strike him on the mouth. 3: Then Paul said to him, "God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! Do you sit to try me according to the Law, and in violation of the Law order me to be struck?" 4: But the bystanders said, "Do you revile God's high priest?" 5: And Paul said, "I was not aware, brethren, that he was high priest; for it is written, 'YOU SHALL NOT SPEAK EVIL OF A RULER OF YOUR PEOPLE.'"

⁷¹ The "flagellum" was the most severe whip used by the Romans. It was used on Jesus. It consisted of a short wooden handle tipped with one or more leather thongs tied in knots often having metal or bone pieces intertwined in the thongs. It was illegal to use this on a Roman citizen. It was reserved for criminals, slaves, etc.

⁷² Jerome, "On Philemon" 23 and "On Famous Men" 5.

1-2: “Perfectly good conscience”... in relationship to his response and obedience to God, not to the dictates of the Jews. They didn’t see it that way and concluded Paul was beginning his defense with a lie, for which he received a hard slap to the mouth.⁷³

3: This angered Paul and he struck out verbally. Paul calls down divine retribution upon Ananias. “Whitewashed wall” means hypocrite, the same image Jesus used when he called the Religious leaders of Israel “whitewashed tombs”. The “Law” Paul referred to was that a man under examination could not be struck or punished until found guilty. This is based in Leviticus 19:15; Deuteronomy 25:1-2; Exodus 23:6.

4: Paul does not recognize the man as the high priest. Ananias was not in office until 48 A.D. and was finally deposed in 58, possibly the same year Paul stands before him. His brief history notes his corruption and cruelty. He was murdered in 66-67 by the Jewish people because he sold out to the Romans as a collaborator for money during the early part of the Jewish war against the Romans.

5: Paul did not recognize Ananias possibly because, A: The man did not come in his ceremonial garb to the hearing, or, B: Paul’s eyesight was poor.⁷⁴

23:6-10

6: But perceiving that one group were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, Paul *began* crying out in the Council, "Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!" 7: As he said this, there occurred a dissension between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. 8: For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor an angel, nor a spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all. 9: And there occurred a great uproar; and some of the scribes of the Pharisaic party stood up and *began* to argue heatedly, saying, "We find nothing wrong with this man; suppose a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?" 10: And as a great dissension was developing, the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them and ordered the troops to go down and take him away from them by force, and bring him into the barracks.

6: Paul realized his appearance before the council (with Lysias looking on to gain information about him) would be a waste of time. He had already presented his testimony. So he employs a brilliant strategy to resolve both problems. Claiming a bond with the Pharisees, the focus of the heated meeting was taken off of Paul. The Roman commander then caught a clear glimpse into the essence (or nonsense) of the matter (See: comment on 23:25-30)

7-8: Now, the debate was between the sects of the Jews who believed differently about the issue of the resurrection and other theological matters.

9: The Pharisees, in their opposition to the Sadducees, took to Paul’s defense to goad them. To add fuel to the fire, they brought angels or spirits into the discussion inflaming the Sadducees all the more.

⁷³ Jesus suffered such an indignity and was spat upon as well (Matthew 26:64-68).

⁷⁴ William Ramsey, in his book “Saint Paul The Traveler”, chapter 2.3, argues that Paul could not have had poor eyesight because Acts 23:1 speaks of Paul looking “intently” at the council. On the other hand, his poor eyesight may have forced him to “look intently”.

10: The shouting was exacerbated by some of the priestly party who were pushing and shoving trying to get to Paul. Some of the Pharisees stood between Paul and them. Lysias had troops go and retrieve Paul. They had to do it by force so they could bring him to the barracks. Paul was thus housed under guard until further notice. Lysias was still stumped as to what to do.

23:11

11: But on the night *immediately* following, the Lord stood at his side and said, "Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also."

11: Once again, in another of Paul's lowest moments, the Lord appeared to him and encouraged him. His words were clear. Paul would not be detained permanently at Jerusalem, but go to Rome. However, it would be some eighteen months to two years before this is accomplished. It begins to appear, as the story progresses, that this encouragement allowed Paul to rest - in that his desire to go to Rome had been confirmed by the Lord. He seems to be more compliant and even cooperative in the custody of the Romans knowing that they may well be the means of facilitating this trip. That indeed became the case. The word "witness" does not mean that one is necessarily a "speaker" of the gospel. The word has nothing directly to do with "speaking". It is the word, "μαρτυρεω" ("mar-tu-reh-oh") and is the word from which we get the word "martyr". It means, "one whose life is expended or sacrificed for a cause". It normally implies that speaking is one means of this "expending of one's life", but not exclusively. But the idea includes "to the death".

23:12-15

12: When it was day, the Jews formed a conspiracy and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul. 13: There were more than forty who formed this plot. 14: They came to the chief priests and the elders and said, "We have bound ourselves under a solemn oath to taste nothing until we have killed Paul. 15: "Now therefore, you and the Council notify the commander to bring him down to you, as though you were going to determine his case by a more thorough investigation; and we for our part are ready to slay him before he comes near *the place*."

12-15: This binding "oath" is the word "anathema" meaning "curse", "damnation" or "devoted to a damnable end".⁷⁵ This was a self-inflicted oath to not eat or drink until Paul was dead. A curse to the death. They even told their conspiracy and oath to the chief priests and elders (the Sanhedrin) and involved them in fulfilling this plot which would require deception on the part of these officials. Did they agree? Did these "more than forty" allow themselves to die of thirst or starvation after the plot failed? We are not told. However, there were ways, as we have seen, for getting out of a vow.

These Jews wanted to have the Sanhedrin request of Claudius Lysias that Paul be brought to the Council chambers on the pretext of further interrogation. The foolishness of this may have been apparent to the council. After all, Paul would be in the company of Roman guards. To attack Paul would mean attacking the guards. The only other option would be to request that the temple guard be used as an escort. It is questionable that Lysias would allow this. The request of the council, as

⁷⁵ See Luke 21:5 for Jesus' interesting use of this term as Luke reports it.

recorded by Luke was to have “the commander” bring Paul down. Paul’s murder would have to be committed outside of the council chambers⁷⁶ and outside of involvement or sight of the Romans unless the plotters didn’t care about losing their own lives as long as Paul was dead. Further, if the council was found to be involved in this conspiracy, it would not go well with them. It is likely they turned these men down. However, the actions of Lysias precluded any fulfillment of this vow.

23:16-22

16: But the son of Paul's sister heard of their ambush, and he came and entered the barracks and told Paul. 17: Paul called one of the centurions to him and said, "Lead this young man to the commander, for he has something to report to him." 18: So he took him and led him to the commander and said, "Paul the prisoner called me to him and asked me to lead this young man to you since he has something to tell you." 19: The commander took him by the hand and stepping aside, *began* to inquire of him privately, "What is it that you have to report to me?" 20: And he said, "The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down tomorrow to the Council, as though they were going to inquire somewhat more thoroughly about him. 21: "So do not listen to them, for more than forty of them are lying in wait for him who have bound themselves under a curse not to eat or drink until they slay him; and now they are ready and waiting for the promise from you." 22: So the commander let the young man go, instructing him, "Tell no one that you have notified me of these things."

16: We have here, for the first time, the mention of a specific member of Paul’s family. His sister and her son. It is not clear whether Paul’s sister was in the city at this time but her son, Paul’s nephew, definitely was. Why? We can offer an educated guess. It is possible he was in the city for educational purposes. Gamaliel was still alive and teaching in Jerusalem. He was still a part of the Sanhedrin. Did he have anything to do with informing Paul’s sister or her son of these plans? If she was also present, had she been persuaded to faith by her brother years before and then forced also to leave Tarsus? There is no mention of her husband. She may have had to leave him. Otherwise, perhaps she was in Jerusalem for the feast days and, out of sheer compassion and love for her brother, violated her oath to consider Paul “*persona-non-grata*” and had him told of the plot.

17-21: “Young man” – over thirteen yet under forty. He reports accurately what he had told Paul. How did he (or his mother) come to know of this plot? Could there have still been members of the Sanhedrin that secretly were believers and sent the message? Or did closeness to one of these men who were plotting this or to friends of one of the conspirators let it slip? We don’t know. We only know that Paul’s nephew came to tell Paul of the plot. The Greek indicates that he could have been among them as they hatched this plot. “Took him by the hand” could indicate that the lad was on the younger side, but not necessarily so.

22: Lysias decision shows his wisdom in protecting the informant as well as preventing the Jews from finding out that their plot was known. He decides on a plan of action. He then informs the Council of his decision to send Paul to Felix at Caesarea, and if they wanted to press charges, they could do so there.

23:23-32

⁷⁶ There could be no illegal or corrupt items in the council chambers. Even the thirty pieces of silver Judas returned were “unclean” and had to be disposed of.

23: And he called to him two of the centurions and said, "Get two hundred soldiers ready by the third hour of the night to proceed to Caesarea, with seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen." 24: *They were* also to provide mounts to put Paul on and bring him safely to Felix the governor. 25: And he wrote a letter having this form: 26: "Claudius Lysias, to the most excellent governor Felix, greetings. 27: "When this man was arrested by the Jews and was about to be slain by them, I came up to them with the troops and rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman. 28: "And wanting to ascertain the charge for which they were accusing him, I brought him down to their Council; 29: and I found him to be accused over questions about their Law, but under no accusation deserving death or imprisonment. 30: "When I was informed that there would be a plot against the man, I sent him to you at once, also instructing his accusers to bring charges against him before you." 31: So the soldiers, in accordance with their orders, took Paul and brought him by night to Antipatris. 32: But the next day, leaving the horsemen to go on with him, they returned to the barracks.

23-24: Lysias realized he had to get Paul out of the city. He did so to by referring the situation to Felix, who had more authority over the matter. Assigning such a significant number of troops helps us realize the seriousness with which Lysias assessed the matter. As far as Felix went, the Jews did not like him at all.⁷⁷ It was only twelve years or so from the great Jewish war against the Roman Empire. The Jews had been fermenting a long time already and anything could set them off. The attack on Paul may partly have simply been out of an overall and historically frustration. Just one more problem we need to get rid of to make life even a little more tolerable.

25-30: This letter reveals that Lysias had come to clarity about what was really going on and saw through the lies and plots of these Jews. He conveniently forgets his rough treatment of Paul and near scourging. But the fascinating thing is, how did Luke get a copy? The answer appears that he was involved in this entire event including the trip to Caesarea and was able to read or copy or procure a copy of this letter, likely after its reading by Felix at Caesarea.

31: On horseback, leaving at nine o'clock at night, the entourage rode to Antipatris, a city on the road to Caesarea some forty miles from Jerusalem. This City was founded by Herod The Great and named in honor of his father Antipater. Could this have been the home of Mnason?

32: Once safely at Antipatris and no following mob, four hundred soldiers rode back to Jerusalem the next day, leaving the seventy horsemen to complete the journey to Caesarea, another 28 miles away.

23:33-35

33: When these had come to Caesarea and delivered the letter to the governor, they also presented Paul to him. 34: When he had read it, he asked from what province he was, and

⁷⁷ Felix was made procurator of Judea by Claudius A.D. 52. He held the position till Festus succeeded him after complaints by the Jews to Nero. He married Drusilla the daughter of Herod Agrippa I with the hope of winning the favour of the Jews. He was one of the most depraved men of his time. Tacitus says of him that "with all cruelty and lust he exercised the power of a king with the spirit of a slave." "The term "governor" (*he-ge-mo-n*) means "leader" from *he-geomai*, to lead, and was applied to leaders of all sorts (emperors, kings, procurators). In the N.T. it is used of Pilate (Mat 27:2), of Felix, (Act 23:24, Act 23:26, Act 23:33; Act 24:1), of Festus (Act 26:30)." (From: Robertson's Word Pictures, *ibid.*) See also 24:26.

when he learned that he was from Cilicia, 35: he said, "I will give you a hearing after your accusers arrive also," giving orders for him to be kept in Herod's Praetorium.

33-34: Antonius Felix asked a typical question to find out if his authority and jurisdiction covered any trial that would be forthcoming or if he would be infringing on another jurisdiction. Satisfied he had proper authority, he assumed responsibility for the case.

35: Again, Luke's detailed account suggests he was present. Herod's Praetorium was once the royal residence of Herod the Great at Caesarea. Now used as a center and administrative office for the Roman regional government, Paul, now known to be a Roman citizen, was well taken care of while under guard. Pontius Pilate had erected a building and a garden in honor of Tiberius at this location and the stone commemorating this is in the British museum. A reproduction stands on the original site today.

Chapter Twenty-four

24:1-9

1: After five days the high priest Ananias came down with some elders, with an attorney *named* Tertullus, and they brought charges to the governor against Paul. 2: After *Paul* had been summoned, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying *to the governor*, "Since we have through you attained much peace, and since by your providence reforms are being carried out for this nation, 3: we acknowledge *this* in every way and everywhere, most excellent Felix, with all thankfulness. 4: "But, that I may not weary you any further, I beg you to grant us, by your kindness, a brief hearing. 5: "For we have found this man a real pest and a fellow who stirs up dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. 6: "And he even tried to desecrate the temple; and then we arrested him. [We wanted to judge him according to our own Law. 7: "But Lysias the commander came along, and with much violence took him out of our hands, 8: ordering his accusers to come before you.] By examining him yourself concerning all these matters you will be able to ascertain the things of which we accuse him." 9: The Jews also joined in the attack, asserting that these things were so.

1: Ananias, along with some elders, was accompanied by one "Tertullus". Tertullus' occupation is noted as that of an "orator" (Greek "ray-tor") translated "attorney" in the NASB, "spokesman" in the RSV and "lawyer" in the NIV. The context tells us he was a "forensic (legal) orator", probably brought along because he had knowledge of proper Roman court procedure. "Some elders" included both Sadducees and Pharisees (implied by verse 15). The "charges" were like our "indictment".

2-3: Paul was brought to the hearing. The Romans allowed the defendant to face his accusers and present a defense (See 25:16). We have adopted our form of government and judicial procedure from the Romans, thus the similarity. When Paul arrived, the spokesman for the accusers would have been invited to bring the charges. In his opening, Tertullus is very complimentary. Even though Antonius Felix was reported to be a ruler who committed all kinds of horrific deeds with impunity (because he was favored by the emperor Claudius) and known to be cruel, corrupt and venal (selling offices or positions for money), his actual administration kept Judea at relative peace.

“Providence” is “foresight”. This compliment is designed to prod Felix to see the consequences if Paul is not found guilty and condemned.

4: The detail of this address is evidence, once again, that Luke was in attendance. At the end of this unnecessary sentence, Felix probably waved his hand or said simply, “continue”.

5: Tertullus’ accusations, unlike the Jew’s, are at least based in known history. “Pest” means a “plague” or “pestilence”. Stirs up “dissent”, i.e. “strife”, “riots” “insurrections”. “Ringleader”, “sect of the Nazarenes” - true enough, and another term used of the new believers who followed Jesus. The point of Tertullus’ speech is to give Felix the impression that Paul is causing all this disturbance and it is effecting the peace and rule the Romans have produced. More Jewish “uprisings” are threatened by Paul and the Sanhedrin just wants to help the Roman authorities avoid all this hassle and do not wish the authorities to come down on them. Paul’s effect, Tertullus notes, is empire wide. Felix could do the empire and the Emperor a great favor by ridding the world of the “pest”. This kind of effect by an “insurrectionist” would be serious in the eyes of Roman authority, if it had merit. In using the term “Nazarenes”, Tertullus cleverly aligns Paul with Jesus who the Romans saw fit to crucify.

6a: “And he even tried to desecrate the temple”. “Tertullus is truthful in reporting the false claim without noting it is a lie. He made not have known. But his words reveal that there is no basis for the claim recorded in 21:28. It is now “an attempt” rather than a factual occurrence. “...and then we arrested him”. Again, a miss-direction, if he had true knowledge that the “arrest attempt” was really a murder attempt. In Tertullus’ efforts to persuade Felix, we catch a hint of another subtle version of the “We have no king but Caesar” exclamation.

6b-8a: [In brackets] This section is not found in any manuscripts prior to the 5th century and in those few later manuscripts where it is found, most are of a poor quality and reliability. Likely these verses were later added to explain Felix’ decision to send for Claudius Lysias. Somewhat pro-Roman, they appear after Constantine came to power and mandated Christianity as the state religion. They add nothing new to the Scriptures.

8b. “By examining him yourself”...Paul, not Lysias as suggested by the inclusions of the previous verses. This “examination” is the term for simple verbal interrogation.

9: Leave it to the rest of the Jews to try to get their two cents in.

24:10-21

10: When the governor had nodded for him to speak, Paul responded: "Knowing that for many years you have been a judge to this nation, I cheerfully make my defense, 11: since you can take note of the fact that no more than twelve days ago I went up to Jerusalem to worship. 12: "Neither in the temple, nor in the synagogues, nor in the city *itself* did they find me carrying on a discussion with anyone or causing a riot. 13: "Nor can they prove to you *the charges* of which they now accuse me. 14: "But this I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets; 15: having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. 16: "In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience *both* before God and before men. 17: "Now after several years I came

to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings; 18: in which they found me *occupied* in the temple, having been purified, without *any* crowd or uproar. But *there were* some Jews from Asia—19: who ought to have been present before you and to make accusation, if they should have anything against me. 20: "Or else let these men themselves tell what misdeed they found when I stood before the Council, 21: other than for this one statement which I shouted out while standing among them, 'For the resurrection of the dead I am on trial before you today.'"

10-13: The fact that Luke notes that the governor "nodded" to Paul lends considerable weight (once again) to Luke having been there in person. Paul's cheerfulness is due to the truth he begins to present, especially knowing that Felix is well aware of the contrivances of the Jews having ruled the province for some seven years. "Twelve days". Luke has spent three chapters describing twelve days of Paul's activity since arriving in Jerusalem and going up to the temple.

14-15: "The Way" (meaning "the path" or "the road") is called a "sect" [literally, a "heresy", a transliteration from the Greek "(h)air-e-sis"]. Paul not only denies that he is violating the Law and the Prophets but claims that the fulfillment of them is in "The Way". He does not specifically mention Jesus. The only ones among the visiting elders who cherish the hope of the resurrection would be the Pharisees present. If Paul hopes to prompt another outcry, it fails due mostly to the fact that interruptions were not tolerated in a Roman court. But his words could not help but provoke the Sadducees among the crowd.

16: A claim made earlier (23:1) for which he received a sharp slap to the face by the order of Ananias who was once again present. No action was taken. It almost seems that Paul is deliberately trying to provoke the crowd so that Felix can ascertain that the issue is purely religious.

17-18a: Now Paul reviews the actual circumstances that brought about his being charged. He makes it clear that his visit to Jerusalem was to bring the offering he promised to James and the apostles. These would be the "alms". The "offerings" would reflect the issue of the vow payment he agreed to participate in with the "four men" James and the elders referred to him. The remainder of verse 17 and the first part of 18 indicate this. His activity in the temple went on without problem until The Jews from Asia started it all. The verses should have been divided when Paul begins to recount the activity of the Jews from Asia.

18b-21: The Jews from "Asia" (Ephesus, principally), who started it all, are conspicuous by their absence at this hearing. They are the proper ones to bring the indictment and anyone else's accusation is merely here-say. So Paul, making that clear, challenges those in attendance to add to these accusations of those not even present. All they can testify to is to Paul's initiating a disruption when he claimed to be standing on trial for his belief in the resurrection of the dead. Paul's effort is complete and those who came to attack and indict him, even with the learned orator Tertullus, have nothing to say because they are not allowed to interrupt. They must have been seething while Paul enjoyed jabbing at them knowing he was safe from them. The Pharisees who came to indict Paul now stand in the middle of an inconsistency in Felix's eyes, at first supporting Paul due to his stand for the truth of the resurrection, and now accusing him for the same stand.

24:22-27

22: But Felix, having a more exact knowledge about the Way, put them off, saying, "When Lysias the commander comes down, I will decide your case." 23: Then he gave orders to the

centurion for him to be kept in custody and *yet* have *some* freedom, and not to prevent any of his friends from ministering to him. 24: But some days later Felix arrived with Drusilla, his wife who was a Jewess⁷⁸, and sent for Paul and heard him *speak* about faith in Christ Jesus. 25: But as he was discussing righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened and said, "Go away for the present, and when I find time I will summon you." 26: At the same time too, he was hoping that money would be given him by Paul; therefore he also used to send for him quite often and converse with him. 27: But after two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, and wishing to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul imprisoned.

22-23: More exact than who or what? Likely a more exact understanding than these accusers assumed he had. He did reside in Caesarea where Phillip ministered and Cornelius had been stationed. His wife Drusilla was also a Jewess and certainly had conveyed information to Felix. His response is to distrust what the accusers have said. He wants to hear from Lysias, a more trustworthy witness. So, he "put *them* off" (dismissed them) and turned to address Paul. Apparently Lysias, for reasons that cannot be determined, was unable to make it to Caesarea. So Paul was left in the custody of the Roman guard, albeit with "some freedom", especially as it was recognized he needed caring for. His friends would include Luke and Aristarchus who were definitely there. Others from the voyage to Jerusalem could still have remained in Jerusalem, but we have no verification of that. We do know he was in need of attention (27:3).

24: "Some days" could indicate several weeks. He "arrived". This indicates he was out of town, perhaps to Jerusalem to get his wife. As Lysias never showed, he may have gone to see Lysias as well. But, it is possible Felix never intended to interview Lysias at all, dismissing the Jews and confining Paul with hopes of receiving a bribe. In any case, Felix decided to personally interview Paul once again, coming with his wife Drusilla. He had Paul brought to himself. His inquiry regarded the things Paul believed and was teaching, while at the same time hoping to be bribed so he could release Paul. Why Drusilla was there is a matter of speculation. Perhaps her fascination with the occult or the realm of the spiritual world drew her there out of curiosity.

25-26: A close look at the sequence of these topics allows one to imagine that after Paul was invited to speak of Christ, something triggered the harsher tone about "righteousness", "self-control" and "judgment" to which Felix responded with fear sending Paul back to confinement. Paul may have very possibly confronted Felix and Drusilla about their marriage, much the same way John the Baptist confronted Herod Antipas and Herodias. Another possibility is that Felix may have suggested the bribe to Paul. Felix' reputation for corruption is revealed here by Luke. Felix could have released Paul but needed sufficient cause to do so. Since the legal matter was unresolved, a heavy bribe would allow Felix some excuse to do so. Felix called for Paul from time to time to converse with him, but Luke reveals neither the conversations nor their results. Did Felix open his heart to Christ? We don't know. We do know that all this played into the Lord's plan to have Paul witness for Him at Rome.

⁷⁸ This beautiful but infamous Jewish woman was the third daughter of Herod Agrippa I, who was eaten of worms (see on [Act 12:1](#)), and a sister of Agrippa II, before whom Paul pleaded, [Act 26:1](#), & c. She was given in marriage at age fifteen to Azizus, king of the Emesenes, who had consented to be circumcised for the sake of the alliance. Felix, with the help of a "magician" seduced her away from her first husband when she was sixteen. She became his third wife. When Festus was procurator of Judea, he saw her, and being captivated with her beauty, persuaded her to desert her husband, transgress the laws of her country, and marry himself" [JOSEPHUS, Antiquities, 20.7.1,2]. Such was this "wife" of Felix.

27: “After two years”. Why was Paul kept in confinement for this long? Luke tells us it was because Felix was doing the Jews a favor (earning credit or ingratiating himself with the Jews). It didn’t work. But what did work was the facilitation of Paul’s goal to reach Rome. He now saw the way to fulfill the Lord’s will for him by the use of the Romans. In 59-60 A.D. Felix was recalled to Rome due to irregularities and his inability to handle riots between Syrians and Jews. The Jews complained ferociously and “Portius Festus” replaced him. Little is known about this man except that he seemed more capable than Felix. He may have been older than Felix, as his office only lasted two years before he died. On the other hand, he seduced Druscilla away from Felix. “Albinus” had replaced him by the year 62 A.D.

Luke covers two years in one verse. It seems Luke now is about other matters pertaining to his narrative(s). It is quite probable that Luke spends the bulk of this two-year period researching his first work. The numerous quotations and personal accounts of Jesus’ family including that of Mary and James as well as other thoughts and stories about Mary and Joseph’s remaining children, Jesus’ disciples, and numerous women and followers of Jesus, reveal personal contact by Luke that no other gospel writer includes.

Did Paul write some of his letters from here? It is possible. It is hard to believe Paul was in custody for two years and did not write a letter. The possibility exists that one or more letters including Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, or the lost letter to Laodicea could have been written at this time. The consensus is that he wrote them from Rome after arriving there, but the question remains. Philippians appears to be written from Rome during Paul’s first imprisonment as he mentions the “praetorian guard” (1:13). The origin of these letters will be discussed at length later in this study.

Chapter Twenty-five

25:1-5

1: Festus then, having arrived in the province, three days later went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea. 2: And the chief priests and the leading men of the Jews brought charges against Paul, and they were urging him, 3: requesting a concession against Paul, that he might have him brought to Jerusalem (*at the same time*, setting an ambush to kill him on the way). 4: Festus then answered that Paul was being kept in custody at Caesarea and that he himself was about to leave shortly. 5: "Therefore," he said, "let the influential men among you go there with me, and if there is anything wrong about the man, let them prosecute him." 6: After he had spent not more than eight or ten days among them, he went down to Caesarea, and on the next day he took his seat on the tribunal and ordered Paul to be brought.

1: “On the third day” Festus went up to Jerusalem. It is a two-day trip of about sixty miles. Luke is apparently in town, since Felix is being replaced and this is big news. The detail about the “third day” suggests Luke’s presence. What would now become of Paul? Luke was very concerned.

2-3: The fierce determination to kill Paul is astonishing. Paul’s influence, even from confinement, is evident. It is conspicuous that James, Peter and other apostles do not incur the wrath of the Jews.

Their compromises or lack of understanding of the provisions of the New Covenant are obvious. They are still under the impression that the Jewish believers are either required to keep the law or they are counseling the church in Jerusalem to do so as to not offend the rest of the city. Either way, their testimony may be diluted. Peter wrote, "Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, and regard the patience of our Lord *as* salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all *his* letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction. (II Peter 3:14-16)

4-6: Ananias, the High Priest, has now been replaced by "Ishmael" through the authority of Herod Agrippa II. Festus' decision is to have the accusers return to Caesarea with him to present their charges. He returned there after eight or ten days, a relatively brief visit. There is a hint of suspicion here as Festus hears the request of the men. Had he heard of the previous plot against Paul? In any case, the Jews chose the most important men among them to accompany Festus back to Caesarea, and then Festus summoned Paul to the hearing, taking the judicial seat so all would know his was the final ruling in this matter.

25:7-11

7: After Paul arrived, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many and serious charges against him which they could not prove, 8: while Paul said in his own defense, "I have committed no offense either against the Law of the Jews or against the temple or against Caesar." 9: But Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, answered Paul and said, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me on these *charges*?" 10: But Paul said, "I am standing before Caesar's tribunal, where I ought to be tried. I have done no wrong to *the* Jews, as you also very well know. 11: "If, then, I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything worthy of death, I do not refuse to die; but if none of those things is *true* of which these men accuse me, no one can hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar."

7-8: There is no hired orator this time and the presentation to Festus is much like we have already heard and Luke notes none of it. The only inference is (from Paul's defense in verses 8 and Festus' account to Agrippa in 18-19) that we have a jumbled mix of pseudo-political concerns and religious violations, very likely exaggerated. Festus was already aware of some of the things they would say. None of the charges are provable, meaning there are no witnesses, no documents by officials, and all of it is hearsay. Paul repeats that he is standing on trial for proclaiming Jesus' resurrection from the dead that this time causes some disturbance among the attending Jews (verse 19).

9: Festus wanted to appear conciliatory to the Jews. Festus, of course, as a new governor, does not want to rile up the Jews right off the bat. Their presentation was apparently weak and the Jews may have suggested that better evidence or direct witnesses could be found in Jerusalem. This of course would have been a ploy so they could assassinate Paul. Festus offered to go to Jerusalem for an additional trial as if this would insure justice. What? He couldn't do it here at Caesarea? This provoked Paul. The suggestion by Festus proved he was not interested in justice but in his own position. Going to Jerusalem might leave Paul thrown to the Jews to placate them and secure Festus' position. Festus neither knew Paul nor cared about him. To Festus, Paul was more a means of political expediency than a victim needing a fair trial. Festus may have hoped that there were sufficient reason to have Paul executed in suggesting they go to Jerusalem. To execute a Roman citizen, Festus needed more than these Jews had brought. He tempts Paul to authorize and sign his

own death warrant. Paul sees through it.

10-11: The cowardice and political manipulation Festus was displaying could not have escaped Paul's attention and Paul did not say directly what he thought, but almost. Paul's retort was simple. If he is being accused of crimes deserving of death, which meant that he violated some Roman law so deserving, why then do we go to Jerusalem? His appeal to Caesar is a direct affront to Festus. He clearly sees and states the premise that Festus is impotent to make a simple decision. He may also sense a sinister motive in Festus' suggestion. So he exercises his right to a trial before Caesar. He did not need to do this, but not to do so would mean an undetermined confinement at Caesarea, or being released to face a Jewish ambush.

25:12-13

12: Then when Festus had conferred with his council, he answered, "You have appealed to Caesar, to Caesar you shall go." 13: Now when several days had elapsed, King Agrippa and Bernice arrived at Caesarea and paid their respects to Festus.

12: Paul's answer of, "No, I will not go to Jerusalem", forces Festus to figure out what to do. He can't absolve him for fear of reprisal. He can't keep him confined or execute him because it would be a crime for which he would suffer equally dire consequences. After all, these proceedings were witnessed. So he conferred with his council. These legal consultants regarding the stipulations of Roman law had to determine if Festus had sufficient grounds (or the case sufficient merit) to warrant the attention of the Emperor of Rome - the ruler of the empire. In addition, Festus saw a way to rid himself of the dilemma. Failing to determining what could be the grounds for this appeal they put that off until they could concoct something worthy of Nero's attention. It had to be a serious charge, bordering on treason or some threat to the peace of the entire empire. Caesar would not be amused by being sent a case dealing with anything less. (More on this later) Meanwhile, Paul's request was granted and the Jews were dismissed for the last time.

13: Agrippa is Herod Agrippa II, the great-grandson of Herod The Great, and son of Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:23). Bernice is his sister. Agrippa would be about 29 years old at this time and had attained ruler-ship over the tetrarchy of Philip. Traconitis, Arca, and important portions of Galilee, Perea, and Judea had been added later. These had been exchanged for his kingship over Chalcis in Lebanon. He now had authority to remove or appoint the High Priest and did so several times. The Romans would consult him on religious matters as Agrippa II was pro-Roman even during the beginning of the Jewish revolt in 66 until his death in 100 A.D.

His sister, Bernice (Berenice) was about 30 years old at this time. She had been married twice already, once when 13, and after her husband died, was betrothed by Agrippa I (her father) to his own brother (her uncle Herod) who received territories for the favor. She had two sons by this union. When her uncle-husband died, she sought refuge with her brother Herod Agrippa II and enjoyed having much in common with him. This was her status at the time of these events. Rumors of incest (for which there is no evidence) later caused her to marry Polemon II, ruler of Olba in Cilicia to assuage these rumors. This union, however, did not last. Bernice was a devoted Jewess, and was also the sister of Druscilla, the wife of Felix who, seduced by Festus, was now married to him. So when Agrippa and Bernice arrived, she and Agrippa were able to visit their sister.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Eight years later she heroically tried to prevent the desecration of the Temple and slaughter of many Jews by the mad procurator, Gessius Florus, just prior to the outbreak of the Jewish rebellion. It nearly cost her her life. She also stood at Agrippa's side as he

Festus had authority over Agrippa II, but both being imperial appointments, and Agrippa being a Jew, the meeting was between equals.

25:14-21

14: While they were spending many days there, Festus laid Paul's case before the king, saying, "There is a man who was left as a prisoner by Felix; 15: and when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews brought charges against him, asking for a sentence of condemnation against him. 16: "I answered them that it is not the custom of the Romans to hand over any man before the accused meets his accusers face to face and has an opportunity to make his defense against the charges. 17: "So after they had assembled here, I did not delay, but on the next day took my seat on the tribunal and ordered the man to be brought before me. 18: "When the accusers stood up, they *began* bringing charges against him not of such crimes as I was expecting, 19: but they *simply* had some points of disagreement with him about their own religion and about a dead man, Jesus, whom Paul asserted to be alive.

14-19: Festus lays out accurately the events to Agrippa and reveals a little more of Paul's actual words in his defense. (See comment at: 25:7-8)

25:20-22

20: "Being at a loss how to investigate such matters, I asked whether he was willing to go to Jerusalem and there stand trial on these matters. 21: "But when Paul appealed to be held in custody for the Emperor's decision, I ordered him to be kept in custody until I send him to Caesar." 22: Then Agrippa *said* to Festus, "I also would like to hear the man myself." "Tomorrow," he said, "you shall hear him."

20-21: Festus is disingenuous here. His ploy failed and now he just feigns innocence and ignorance. What he is looking for is additional support in his charges against Paul worthy of the Emperor's attention. Agrippa picks up on this and requests an audience.

25:23-27

23: So, on the next day when Agrippa came together with Bernice amid great pomp, and entered the auditorium accompanied by the commanders and the prominent men of the city, at the command of Festus, Paul was brought in. 24: Festus said, "King Agrippa, and all you gentlemen here present with us, you see this man about whom all the people of the Jews appealed to me, both at Jerusalem and here, loudly declaring that he ought not to live any longer. 25: "But I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death; and since he himself appealed to the Emperor, I decided to send him. 26: "Yet I have nothing definite about him to

tried to stop the rebellion knowing the Romans would destroy Jerusalem. But they would have none of it. Later the Jews burned down the palaces of Agrippa and Bernice (that Agrippa had built to overlook the temple angering the Jews even more). Both of them took an oath to the emperor Vespasian and Bernice was courted by his son Titus when she and her brother sought refuge at Caesarea. But Roman anger at the Jews forced them to separate (as she was Jewish) and she went into exile in 70 A.D. two years before Titus' death. No more is known of Bernice after this. With Agrippa II comes the end of the Herodian line. All in all, Bernice seems an undeserved victim of history. Her story is typical of women used as chattel for the power brokers. Being Attached to the Jews, the Herods and the Romans did not help her to be seen in a favorable light by the Jews or by the historians Josephus or Tacitus.

write to my lord. Therefore I have brought him before you *all* and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after the investigation has taken place, I may have something to write. 27: "For it seems absurd to me in sending a prisoner, not to indicate also the charges against him."

23: "Great pomp" indicates that Festus arranged a welcoming celebration in a auditorium (lecture hall)⁸⁰ that probably included decorations, trumpeters, a show of entertainment, military honors and the presence of dignitaries all dressed in formal clothes. These dignitaries included five commanders of the cohorts stationed at Caesarea, leading men of the city both Jewish and Gentile. Their wives may have accompanied them and assuredly Druscilla was there. Agrippa and Bernice were given the seat of honor. Festus sat to one side. Food and drink were probably served and all were in a fine mood when Festus called for Paul to be brought in. He had been informed of this and had prepared. He entered chained between two guards, yet surely looked as good as possible as a show to Agrippa that he was being properly treated and cared for.

24-27: Festus addresses Agrippa and the crowd. Festus appears to put Agrippa on the spot implying that proper charges, (unattainable by himself while at the same time ruling to send him to Caesar), need to be established. He leaves the task to Agrippa. While it looks as if Festus is totally inept, this also could have been orchestrated in some way. We shall see.

Chapter Twenty-six

26:1-3

1: Agrippa said to Paul, "You are permitted to speak for yourself." Then Paul stretched out his hand and *proceeded* to make his defense: 2: "In regard to all the things of which I am accused by the Jews, I consider myself fortunate, King Agrippa, that I am about to make my defense before you today; 3: especially because you are an expert in all customs and questions among *the Jews*; therefore I beg you to listen to me patiently.

1-3: Festus defers to Agrippa and gives him charge of the hearing. Though Agrippa is not in command here he cordially takes the lead without objection. This gives one pause and thus the feeling that this may have been planned in advance. Paul knows that there is little that can be done except send him to Rome as already decided by Festus. Both Festus and Agrippa are looking for a basis upon which to charge the apostle with an offense worthy of Caesar's attention.

Paul's "defense" is a concerted effort to preach the gospel disguised as a defense. This is a grand opportunity considering all the dignitaries present. If some come to faith, the gospel will have other adherents to aid in its spread. It is not necessary, as was his frequent custom, to recite to Agrippa the entire plan of God as revealed through the Scriptures and how it is fulfilled in Jesus. Agrippa is soundly familiar with the promises to and hopes of Israel.

He calls Agrippa "King" referring to his former status in Lebanon.⁸¹ Agrippa's knowledge and experience with Judaism cannot be questioned. The compliment to Agrippa is sincere in that Paul knows Agrippa's expertise in Judaism, as well as his knowledge of Paul himself and his fair

⁸⁰ The ruins of this structure still exist at Caesarea.

⁸¹ In Acts 9:15 Jesus tells Saul that he will testify before "kings".

mindfulness toward the Jews. Verse 3 could even read, “Because you are especially expert in all customs...”. Paul appeals to him on this basis and begins with his personal testimony.

26:4-7

4: "So then, all Jews know my manner of life from my youth up, which from the beginning was spent among my *own* nation and at Jerusalem; 5: since they have known about me for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that I lived *as* a Pharisee according to the strictest sect of our religion. 6: "And now I am standing trial for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers; 7: *the promise* to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly serve *God* night and day. And for this hope, O King, I am being accused by Jews."

4-5: Paul begins by asserting that his life is well known by the Jews. This is clear from the sustained hostility against Paul for nearly twenty-five years. His turning from his Pharisaical tradition was one cause for ill feelings toward him by the Jews.

6-7: There is an odd mix between verses 5 and 9. It seems more logical to place verses 6-8 after verse 23, and that verse 5 ought to be followed by verse 9. Verse 6 introduces a conclusion and verse 7 amplifies it. In any case, these verses are somewhat parenthetical and a summary of the argument. The “hope” Paul alludes to is the coming of The Messiah and the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

26:8

8: "Why is it considered incredible among you *people* if God does raise the dead?"

8: This question is oddly out of place or else Paul has jumped to the heart of the matter prior to his actual testimony that brings it's basis to light.

26:9-10

9: "So then, I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10: "And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them.

9-10: “I cast my vote against them”. If this statement is literal and Paul is not using it figuratively, it would mean that Paul was indeed married because one could not cast a vote unless he was a member of the Sanhedrin and one could not be a member of the Sanhedrin unless one was married. The term “I cast my vote” means literally, “I cast down my black pebble”. The Greek (“κατηνεγκα ψηφον”) (“kat-eh-neg-ka pseh-phone”) is so specific in the words selected by Luke

(quoted by Paul) that they are seldom used outside of this actual action. Paul was probably in his late thirties, or more likely, early forties when this occurred. For a Pharisee not to be married at this age was unheard of. The necessity to produce heirs and preserve the family lineage, traditions and property were of paramount importance to the Jewish male. He would often take a bride as young as thirteen to begin procreation to assure sons. Some argue that Paul, a citizen of Tarsus, could not have been a member of the Sanhedrin. But Paul states that he grew up in Jerusalem and was taught at the feet of Gamaliel, (Acts 22:3) who himself was a member of the Sanhedrin.

The use of this term before Agrippa, Festus and the company there would be inappropriate if Paul (as Saul) was not a member of the council. His membership there would be one cause of the remembrance many in the Council would have of him. If this is true, then he either lost his wife due to her death and was a widower, or else she renounced him when he became a believer.

26:11-18 ⁸²

11: "And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities. 12: "While so engaged as I was journeying to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, 13: at midday, O King, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who were journeying with me. 14: "And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' 15: "And I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. 16: 'But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; 17: rescuing you from the *Jewish* people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, 18: to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.'

11: Paul tried to “force them to blaspheme”, meaning from a Christian viewpoint, he tried to get them to curse Jesus. This is the most reasonable understanding. From a Jewish viewpoint it would mean to get them to confess that Jesus was the Son of God, a blasphemy punishable ultimately by death. But true Christians would not have to be forced to do this.

12: ...to bring the converts back to Jerusalem.

13-14: “It is hard for you to kick against the goads”⁸³. An additional bit of information not revealed before. Jesus is quoting an old proverb (not Jewish) intimating that Paul is fighting something that will cause more injury to himself than he is trying to inflict on others. It is as if Jesus is suggesting that Paul is God’s “work animal”.

16-18: These words are attributed to Jesus in this account, but in chapter nine much of this comes by way of Ananias, and in chapter twenty-two they come both by way of Ananias and in a trance in Jerusalem.

⁸² See additional comments at chapter 9:1-16 and 22:1-21

⁸³ The “goad” or “oxgoad” was a pole of varying lengths and thicknesses used to poke the hind-quarters of an animal pulling a plow. It had a point on one end and an iron spade on the other for cleaning mud and debris from the plow. It could be up to eight feet in length and several inches thick. If the animal kicks at the goad, it would injure himself. It could also be used while an animal was treading out the grain. The term is used in two other places in the Bible. In Judges 3:31 we read, “After him came Shamgar the son of Anath, who struck down six hundred Philistines with an oxgoad; and he also saved Israel”. The imagery is used in Ecclesiastes 12:11, “The words of wise men are like goads, and masters of *these* collections are like well-driven nails; they are given by one Shepherd.”

26:19-21

19: "So, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, 20: but *kept* declaring both to those of Damascus first, and *also* at Jerusalem and *then* throughout all the region of Judea, and *even* to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance. 21: "For this reason *some* Jews seized me in the temple and tried to put me to death.

19-21: Paul makes it clear that it is his belief that God (through Christ) commissioned him to fulfill the declaration God had made many times over in the Law and the Prophets that caused the Jews to seize him and try to effect his death.

26:22-23

22: "So, having obtained help from God, I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place; 23: that the Christ was to suffer, *and* that by reason of *His* resurrection from the dead He would be the first to proclaim light both to the *Jewish* people and to the Gentiles."

22-23: Paul concludes by reiterating the mission and the foundation for it – Christ’s resurrection from the dead. Here, verses 6-8 fit in well and justify Agrippa’s response:

[6: "And now I am standing trial for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers; 7: *the promise* to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly serve *God* night and day. And for this hope, O King, I am being accused by Jews." 8: "Why is it considered incredible among you *people* if God does raise the dead?]

26:24-29

24: While *Paul* was saying this in his defense, Festus said in a loud voice, "Paul, you are out of your mind! *Your* great learning is driving you mad." 25: But Paul said, "I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I utter words of sober truth. 26: "For the king knows about these matters, and I speak to him also with confidence, since I am persuaded that none of these things escape his notice; for this has not been done in a corner. 27: "King Agrippa, do you believe the Prophets? I know that you do." 28: Agrippa *replied* to Paul, "In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian." 29: And Paul *said*, "I would wish to God, that whether in a short or long time, not only you, but also all who hear me this day, might become such as I am, except for these chains."

24: Festus, who had been sitting quietly while Paul replied to Agrippa and addressed the gathering, interrupted with agitation. He accused Paul of (literally) “losing his mind”. “Heavenly visions”, “resurrections from the dead” to a Gentile Roman were too much. Festus’ reference to Paul’s “great learning” could be due to: 1. A personal knowledge of Paul’s background not revealed to us by Luke as to how he accumulated it, 2. The frequent use of or mention of, by Paul, the Law and Prophets, 3: Paul actually quoting scriptures at length not reproduced here by Luke.

25-26: Paul turns now and addresses Festus directly claiming soundness of mind. He references Agrippa as a resource to the truth of his sober and sane discourse since Agrippa has been cognizant

of all this for many years. The phrase, “this has not been done in a corner” is not Jewish but a common understatement understood by those present.

27: Paul again addresses Agrippa continuing his evangelism. Paul knows Agrippa knows the prophets. Agrippa can certainly attest to the truth Paul states regarding the promises of God and the hopes of the Jews. Did his declaration of Christ as the fulfillment of both of these convince Agrippa? Paul hopes so and it is possible. But Agrippa is cautious. His reply reveals he is clear about what Paul is saying and its implication.

But what does his reply connote? Is he actually moved or is he replying with sarcasm. It is difficult to say. The Greek translates literally⁸⁴, “and Agrippa said to Paul, ‘in a little you persuade me to become a Christian’”. Is it a “little time” (already spent) or, “in a little time” (yet to come) or “in a little speech” (or effort)? Also, is it implied, “you are persuading me”, or “you think or hope to persuade me”? The possibility exists that Agrippa is moved to consider faith but answers sarcastically as if the effort is inadequate. His answer would sound like, “You think after a short time (or brief effort) I will (or would) be persuaded to become a Christian?” Paul’s response gives us a clue. He hopes that both Agrippa and all present “might become” as he is, believers – except for his chains.

26:30-32

30: The king stood up and the governor and Bernice, and those who were sitting with them,
31: and when they had gone aside, they *began* talking to one another, saying, "This man is not doing anything worthy of death or imprisonment." 32: And Agrippa said to Festus, "This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar."

30: Once again, Luke seems to have been present as he notes those who stood up with Agrippa, namely, Festus and Bernice. Likely these others were the “legal consultants”.⁸⁵

31-32: It is determined in the discussion that there are no charges worthy of Roman consideration. Paul, of course does not want to be set free because of those who wait in ambush. Further, he would have to depart immediately for Rome at his own expense. It has all worked out for the good as God promises. Festus must honor Paul’s right as a Roman citizen to appeal to Caesar. The case is weak, and witnesses will have to be called to Rome to accuse Paul. That any would pursue it that far is unlikely, and ultimately does not occur. All Festus can do is send Paul to Rome noting his request is being honored since he is a citizen of the empire. Let Nero figure out what to do.

Chapter Twenty-seven

27:1-3

1: When it was decided that we would sail for Italy, they proceeded to deliver Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion of the Augustan cohort named Julius. 2: And embarking in an Adramyttian ship, which was about to sail to the regions along the coast of Asia, we put out to

⁸⁴ ο δε Αγριππας προς τον Παυλον εφν, εν ολιγω με πειθεις Χριστιανον γενεσθαι.

⁸⁵ See comment on verse 12.

sea accompanied by Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica. 3: The next day we put in at Sidon; and Julius treated Paul with consideration and allowed him to go to his friends and receive care.

1: The time of year is probably late August or early September of 60 A.D. Winter is approaching. When the decision was made to ship Paul and other prisoners to Rome, the prisoners were all given into the control of a centurion of the “Augustan Cohort” (or “company”) named Julius.⁸⁶ Luke is with them (the pronoun “we” is once again evident) and goes to the trouble to honor this man and his cohort. Yet both are sketchy in history. The “Augustan” cohort could be the auxiliary stationed at Samaria at this time. The actual word translated “Augustan” is “Sebaste” in the Greek - the Herodian name for the hill or ancient city of Samaria. But it is also a Greek translation for the Latin “Augusta” meaning “venerable”, “august”, “imperial” or “pertaining to Augustus”. It could be a traditional designation of honor for those soldiers who were once in charge of security and safety of the Emperor himself, beginning with Augustus. Julius would have been accompanied by a number of soldiers, possibly an entire company of sixty to a hundred, but at least as many needed to control the prisoners. This would be two soldiers per prisoner and some others to carry out additional tasks.

2: This was a cargo ship from Adramyttium, the port city southeast of Troas around the peninsula to the East past Assos. Its principle cargo was probably grain.⁸⁷ The prisoners were all herded on board and the ship, bound for Asia Minor with stops in between, got underway. Aristarchus, who has now been Paul’s faithful companion and helper for many years accompanies Luke and Paul. If others were with them (such as Trophimus) etc. we are not told directly.

The ship must have left in the late afternoon or evening and sailed at night as it put into port at Sidon the next day, a trip of about 80 miles by sea. There was some cargo to be delivered to Sidon.

3: This verse substantiates the fact that Paul was in need of continual aid. Now over sixty years old and in poor physical condition, both Luke (whom Paul calls the “beloved physician” - Colossians 4:14) and Aristarchus are there to take care of him. Seeing his condition and need, Julius allows Paul to go to friends in Sidon to “receive care”. The words Luke uses indicate more than “refreshment”. These words are suitably translated “obtain care or attention” or be “attended to” (from the root “ἐπιμελεομαι” (“epi-meh-leh-o-mai”). Except for Paul’s use of the term in I Timothy 3:5, only Luke uses this word, and it is in a medical context each time.⁸⁸ Other terms are available to describe the need for simple rest or refreshment, but Luke carefully chooses words to indicate that Paul was in need of more intensive care. Julius took care of Paul throughout the trip to Rome (27:43, 28:16) and Aristarchus remained with Paul at Rome. Perhaps there were others of Paul’s usual companions present, but we are not told.

27:4-5

4: From there we put out to sea and sailed under the shelter of Cyprus because the winds were

⁸⁶ A full Roman legion would consist of 6000 men divided into 10 “cohorts” plus cavalry. Each “cohort” consisted of 600 men plus appropriate cavalry. Julius commanded a “cohort”. Under his command would be a minimum of 6 Centurions each commanding a “century” of 100 men plus assigned cavalry. A “cohort” however, could actually consist of anywhere from 500 to 1000 men (including cavalry) depending on the situation. This could apply especially if it were an “auxiliary” cohort, often assigned to minor provinces.

⁸⁷ See footnote 31

⁸⁸ See: Luke 10:34-35

contrary. 5: When we had sailed through the sea along the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we landed at Myra in Lycia.

4-5: Leaving Sidon, the trip was to be non-stop to Myra in Lycia, a trip of some 350 to 400 miles, taking normally a week or so to complete. But the “winds were contrary”, against them, out of the northwest. Winter is coming and the climate patterns are shifting. The Mediterranean is getting rough. So the captain of the ship is forced to divert around Cyprus to soften the effect of the wind, hugging the coast, and with the contrary wind, up to two weeks could be added for this trip. Finally they landed at Myra. The small city was about two miles from the coast. It is probable, that while Julius was seeking another transport, Paul and his companions rested in town somewhere. There is no mention of believers at Myra, but it is quite possible that he found some who were hospitable.

27:6-8

6: There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing for Italy, and he put us aboard it. 7: When we had sailed slowly for a good many days, and with difficulty had arrived off Cnidus, since the wind did not permit us *to go* farther, we sailed under the shelter of Crete, off Salmone; 8: and with difficulty sailing past it we came to a place called Fair Havens, near which was the city of Lasea.

6-8: At Myra, they changed ships. This new ship was based in Alexandria in Egypt and headed for Rome. It was a larger vessel than the Adramyttium ship. In fact, they had to anchor in the harbor and shuttle passengers to the dock in a small boat they towed along behind⁸⁹. After they left port, they headed west but fought stiff head winds forcing them to tack back and forth. This took a great deal of time. Once they passed Rhodes and approached the open Aegean off Cnidus, the decision was made to use the wind to push them southbound toward Crete rather than try to make direct headway against rough seas and stiff winds. The wind was out of the northwest to southeast. The word “difficulty” is an understatement. The word indicates it was a horrible ordeal.

Once they reached Crete and sighted Salmone, the wind was still pushing them away from the Island. But with hard work and tacking, (another “ordeal”) they slowly made it up the southern coast (the “leeward” side) of Crete to Fair Havens. This is the modern Kalus Limeonas, a small bay two miles east of Cape Matala. There they made port and all were able to get off the ship and rest. This port opens to the southeast and would give them some protection from the wind, but was not fit to host them for a lengthy stay and certainly not for the Winter (27:12).

27:9-12

9: When considerable time had passed and the voyage was now dangerous, since even the fast was already over, Paul *began* to admonish them, 10: and said to them, "Men, I perceive that the voyage will certainly be with damage and great loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives." 11: But the centurion was more persuaded by the pilot and the captain of the ship than by what was being said by Paul. 12: Because the harbor was not suitable for wintering, the majority reached a decision to put out to sea from there, if somehow they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete, facing southwest and northwest, and spend the winter *there*.

⁸⁹ Again see footnote 31 regarding Roman ships and their capacities.

9: “Considerable time” could indicate up to several weeks. “The fast” refers to the “Day of Atonement” which came in early October that year. It had taken a month to get to Fair Havens from Caesarea (some seven hundred miles the way they went), the time with fair winds normally needed to get to Rome itself in a straight course from Caesarea. So now we are in mid to late October, planning to continue on. This finds the Mediterranean at its most fierce. There was much discussion.

10-12: Whether to continue on with the voyage was the up to the Centurion. A discussion took place. When Paul overheard plans to sail on, he strongly admonished them not to continue. He had already suffered shipwreck more than once and knew the dangers that existed. However, the captain (owner) and pilot (captain) of the ship were more persuasive to Julius than was Paul. To chance staying at Fair Havens for the winter was not palatable. Trying to reach Rome was not palatable either because sailing at this time of year was practically suicidal. But, there was a port in Crete only about 50 miles to the northwest. It was called “Phoenix” (modern day “Lutro”). This port is open to the southeast and northeast, the opposite direction of the winter winds and would provide better shelter. After discussion, the decision was reached to try for this harbor and spend the winter there (until March). They allowed the small shuttle boat to tag along behind.

27:13-17

13: When a moderate south wind came up, supposing that they had attained their purpose, they weighed anchor and *began* sailing along Crete, close *inshore*. 14: But before very long there rushed down from the land a violent wind, called Euraquilo; 15: and when the ship was caught *in it* and could not face the wind, we gave way *to it* and let ourselves be driven along. 16: Running under the shelter of a small island called Clauda, we were scarcely able to get the *ship's* boat under control. 17: After they had hoisted it up, they used supporting cables in undergirding the ship; and fearing that they might run aground on *the shallows* of Syrtis, they let down the sea anchor and in this way let themselves be driven along.

13-15: The wind came from the southwest, a shift from the winds out of the northwest. They felt it was a good omen as his wind would push them toward the island rather than away from it. They hurriedly shuttled the prisoners and crew to the ship and hoisted up the anchor. They kept the ship close to shore, within a mile, but nearly half way to their destination disaster struck. From the starboard (the land side) a wind rose up storming over the island from the northeast the southwest and caught them sideways pushing them away from Crete. This blast was much like the fabled “nor’easter”, with winds up to sixty miles an hour. As it encountered the southwest wind, a terrible turbulence occurred. Luke uses a word from which we get the term “typhoon”. The ship had no chance to stay on course and the captain allowed the ship to run before the wind. Otherwise, it would have had its masts torn off and been at the mercy of the violent sea.

16: Clauda (or Cauda) is about 25 miles due south of “Phoenix” (Lutra). The ship is being tossed about and, to make matters worse, the towed shuttle boat is causing difficulty with the steering and handling of the larger ship, no doubt due to it being swamped with water. Their desire is to turn west “under” (the leeward side of) Clauda. But this effort is being hampered by the pull of the shuttle boat. So they hauled it to the ship emptied it and hoisted it on board, no small task.

17: “Undergirding” the ship. This is the only place this word is found in the New Testament. The ship was no doubt starting to leak due to the stress. Apparently, while waters were slightly calmer, leeward of Clauda, some type of rope or cable was passed under the ship at key places, (especially

the bow and stern) and attached to the deck in order to hold the ship intact and keep it from coming apart. Possibly these ropes or cables could have been simply stretched across the deck at strategic places and secured tightly for the same purpose. It is not clear which method was used. Possibly both. The rudders (large steering oars) were raised and lashed to the deck, and the sails were dropped. The crew (and probably able prisoners) were involved in this work.

Once this was done, they sensed that the wind could drive them south toward the African coast onto a series of large sandbars and shoals called the “shallows of Syrtis”. These dangerous protrusions of land are found from the northwest side of Cyrene all the way north to Carthage. From their present location, it would only be 100-150 miles away. The wind strength, if it continued, would carry them there in less than 24 hours. So they let out a sea anchor. This would be a large wooden or metal “dish” that would slow and stabilize the ship. Some ships just used large boulders or weights. It would not be let out enough to catch the bottom. They then allowed the ship to be driven before the wind. The problem, however, was that the ship was taking on water. They could not bail fast enough to keep it high in the storm tossed sea.

27:18-20

18: The next day as we were being violently storm-tossed, they began to jettison the cargo; 19: and on the third day they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands. 20: Since neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small storm was assailing *us*, from then on all hope of our being saved was gradually abandoned.

18: This would indicate that the ship was tossing and dipping so much that water was taken onboard to a greater extent that they could bail it out. To raise the ship in the water and prevent this, they began throwing the cargo overboard. But not all of it.

19: After the third day it was still not enough. No doubt the ship was taking on water both over the deck and through leaks having sprung in the stressed hull. So they began throwing (all but the critical or essential) ships-tackle and supplies overboard. This is now a desperate situation.

20: Their means of navigation and knowing where they were was eliminated due heavy overcast and darkness. It was a huge storm going on for days with little respite, and they were losing their battle against the elements. Unknown to them, their direction had shifted west-northwest. As violent and frightening as this experience was, there seems to be a divine hand in it all from before the ship from Caesarea even left its harbor. When Paul finally arrived in Rome, the timing was perfect regarding Nero's state of mind and all that transpired thereafter. Perhaps the “Euraquilo” was not such a freak storm after all.

27:21-26

21: When they had gone a long time without food, then Paul stood up in their midst and said, "Men, you ought to have followed my advice and not to have set sail from Crete and incurred this damage and loss. 22: "Yet now I urge you to keep up your courage, for there will be no loss of life among you, but *only* of the ship. 23: "For this very night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood before me, 24: saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and behold, God has granted you all those who are sailing with you.' 25: "Therefore, keep up your courage, men, for I believe God that it will turn out exactly as I have been told. 26: "But we must run aground on a certain island."

21: He introduces his comments this way to impress on his hearers that he knows what he is talking about. This is not a "I told you so...", but more to gain their attention at this point. At the same time his demeanor is humble, because he now knows his dire predictions were premature. Now he speaks with confidence.

22: This bore weight as Paul had predicted disaster and loss of life as the voyage began to turn for the worse (27:10).

23-26: This time it is not his "perception", but a direct message from God by way of an "angel" (messenger). Paul would have spent time in prayer during the voyage and it seems that this appearance suggests that God is answering his prayers. Paul is not just concerned for his own life and mission but for all those on board.

27:27-32

27: But when the fourteenth night came, as we were being driven about in the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors *began* to surmise that they were approaching some land. 28: They took soundings and found *it to be* twenty fathoms; and a little farther on they took another sounding and found *it to be* fifteen fathoms. 29: Fearing that we might run aground somewhere on the rocks, they cast four anchors from the stern and wished for daybreak. 30: But as the sailors were trying to escape from the ship and had let down the *ship's* boat into the sea, on the pretense of intending to lay out anchors from the bow, 31: Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, "Unless these men remain in the ship, you yourselves cannot be saved." 32: Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the *ship's* boat and let it fall away.

27-29: "The fourteenth night" since the storm began just out of Fair Havens. They were now able to determine roughly where they were, so the clouds had dissipated though the winds were still stiff, driving the ship along to such an extent that they could not risk trying to turn into it. But their exact location was unknown. Taking "soundings" meant they were dropping a line weighted with a heavy lead "dart" into the sea. This line was marked or knotted at six-foot intervals. They would drop the line at the bow and walk it along toward the stern until the line went slack. After taking these soundings they surmised they were nearing land, but couldn't see because it was the middle of the night and the sea was still high. But where were they? Verse 29 suggests they may have thought they were nearing the shallows of Syrtis near Carthage. Fearing they might run aground on rocks, they deployed four stern anchors to halt the progress of the ship. Then they prayed that daybreak would be hastened.

30-32: Under cover of darkness, some of the crew had let the ship's boat down into the water in order to try to make land on their own. Seeing the intent, Paul spoke to the Centurion. Julius listened to Paul and had the boat cut away so that it could no longer be used. Julius' confidence in Paul was now strong.

27:33-

33: Until the day was about to dawn, Paul was encouraging them all to take some food, saying, "Today is the fourteenth day that you have been constantly watching and going without eating, having taken nothing. 34: "Therefore I encourage you to take some food, for this is for your preservation, for not a hair from the head of any of you will perish." 35: Having said this, he took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of all, and he broke it and began to eat. 36:

All of them were encouraged and they themselves also took food. 37: All of us in the ship were two hundred and seventy-six persons. 38: When they had eaten enough, they *began* to lighten the ship by throwing out the wheat into the sea.

33: “Until the day...” Just before dawn, at the time the sky begins to lighten. No regular meals or provisions had been distributed since the storm began. It appears that the storm began to weaken and calmer conditions looked to be oncoming.

34-35: Paul knew they would need all the strength they could muster to make it to shore and assured them all that they would survive. “Not a hair of your head...”-a common proverbial expression (See: I Samuel 14:45 and Luke 21:18 for example). Paul showed his faith and confidence by giving thanks and eating in the midst of weakness and hopelessness.

36-38: The number of crew, prisoners and passengers is not unusual. Some Roman ships could transport twice that many people plus cargo⁹⁰. The extra baskets or bags of wheat were thrown overboard so the ship could ride higher in the water and make it closer to shore. Remember, this ship did not tie up at the docks, but anchored offshore and used the shuttle boat to transport goods and people back and forth.

27:39-44

39: When day came, they could not recognize the land; but they did observe a bay with a beach, and they resolved to drive the ship onto it if they could. 40: And casting off the anchors, they left them in the sea while at the same time they were loosening the ropes of the rudders; and hoisting the foresail to the wind, they were heading for the beach. 41: But striking a reef where two seas met, they ran the vessel aground; and the prow stuck fast and remained immovable, but the stern *began* to be broken up by the force of *the waves*. 42: The soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, so that none of *them* would swim away and escape; 43: but the centurion, wanting to bring Paul safely through, kept them from their intention, and commanded that those who could swim should jump overboard first and get to land, 44: and the rest *should follow*, some on planks, and others on various things from the ship. And so it happened that they all were brought safely to land.

39-40: They saw the land in the distance but did not know exactly where they were. The wind was still treacherous and the sea high. But visibility was possible (though the skies were dark with rain clouds – 28:2) and after sighting a bay with a beach it was decided (after a consultation as the Greek suggests) to drive the ship as far into the bay as possible and run it aground. They cut the four anchors loose, released the rudders (the two large steering oars raised and lashed to the deck), raised the foresail and put everything they had into steering the ship toward the beach. Control was severely limited and they could barely head the ship toward land.

41: “Striking a shoal”... The Greek says, “And they fell into a place where two seas were crashing together (over a shoal) and the prow of the vessel stuck fast and remained unmovable”. Meanwhile, the stern of the ship was being thrown side to side by the force of opposing waves and began to come apart, and, to make matters worse, rain began to fall.

⁹⁰ Footnote 31

42-43: It was now time to abandon ship. The soldiers recommended killing all the prisoners otherwise they would escape. For a soldier to lose a prisoner was a serious matter indeed. Julius, however, overrode their counsel and told everyone who could swim to get overboard and swim for the shore. Others needed to grab onto a floating plank (or, possibly, hang onto a crewman) if they couldn't swim. Julius' decision was simply based on the fact that he wanted to get Paul safely through the disaster. He had come to have a great deal of respect and cared for the aging apostle. The distance to shore could have easily been up to a mile. After a final ordeal at sea, they all made it to shore safely, albeit cold, wet, exhausted and now the rain fell in earnest.⁹¹

Chapter Twenty-eight

28:1-6

1: When they had been brought safely through, then we found out that the island was called Malta. 2: The natives showed us extraordinary kindness; for because of the rain that had set in and because of the cold, they kindled a fire and received us all. 3: But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat and fastened itself on his hand. 4: When the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they *began* saying to one another, "Undoubtedly this man is a murderer, and though he has been saved from the sea, justice has not allowed him to live." 5: However he shook the creature off into the fire and suffered no harm. 6: But they were expecting that he was about to swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But after they had waited a long time and had seen nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and *began* to say that he was a god.

1-2: "Malta" was known as "Melita" in those days. It is difficult to know with certainty where this landing occurred on Malta, though tradition places the bay on the northeast side of the island about twelve miles from the southeastern end. "Saint Paul's Bay" is named for this event but this, as the place of landing, is very speculative. This bay is quite large and it would have been nearly impossible to see a beach within it. In addition, there is no beach there today. More likely the bay they attempted to reach was closer to the southern tip of the island and that they traveled to "St. Paul's Bay" from which they later departed. "Natives" indicates those who did not speak Greek or Latin, but only a native tongue. These were a people of mixed blood: Phoenician Semites mixed with European strains. They were very hospitable and invited the stranded party to warm by a fire. Luke's words indicate that no prisoners escaped. We are now in mid to late November of 60 A.D.

3-4: Paul's determination not to be waited on even though he had physical limitations is extraordinary. He pitched in to help gathering sticks for the fire. As he laid the sticks down a "viper" no doubt in hibernation for the winter, was awakened by the warmth of the fire. Slithering out through the bundle of sticks Paul was laying on the fire, it fastened itself on Paul's hand. Today, there are no poisonous vipers on Malta but they could have been eradicated over the centuries. However, according to Ramsey, there is a the small constrictor (*Coronella Austriaca*) which still exists in the island and may be the "viper," though it has no poison fangs, but clings and bites. However, the natives would have had experience with this "little beast" and knew that those bitten by it had little chance of survival. They were no doubt aware that Paul was one among several

⁹¹ Psalm 107 :23-31 comes to mind.

prisoners. Their superstition or religious pre-disposition is evident as they assumed Paul's fate was due to his being a murderer and thus getting his "just rewards".

5-6: After shaking the snake off his hand, Paul went about his business to the buzzing of the crowd who expected his arm to swell up and Paul to fall dead. Luke once again uses the medical term, "pimpremi" for "swelling up". It is only used this one time in The New Testament. When Paul failed to be affected by the bite, the native people began to think he might be a god. (Note Acts 14:11-18) This event reminds us of the spurious ending of Mark 16:17-18. That passage might have been actually drawn from this event and is similar to Luke 10:19 although Jesus use of "serpents" in that passage is a metaphor for Satan and his demons.

28:7-14

7: Now in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to the leading man of the island, named Publius, who welcomed us and entertained us courteously three days. 8: And it happened that the father of Publius was lying *in bed* afflicted with *recurrent* fever and dysentery; and Paul went in *to see* him and after he had prayed, he laid his hands on him and healed him. 9: After this had happened, the rest of the people on the island who had diseases were coming to him and getting cured. 10: They also honored us with many marks of respect; and when we were setting sail, they supplied *us* with all we needed. 11: At the end of three months we set sail on an Alexandrian ship which had wintered at the island, and which had the Twin Brothers for its figurehead. 12: After we put in at Syracuse, we stayed there for three days. 13: From there we sailed around and arrived at Rhegium, and a day later a south wind sprang up, and on the second day we came to Puteoli. 14: There we found *some* brethren, and were invited to stay with them for seven days; and thus we came to Rome.

7: "...leading man..." The top official or authority on the island. Possibly either a Roman appointee or official named Publius, such as the proconsul Sergius Paulus on Cypress.⁹² He "entertained us courteously"... Publius was gracious to offer lodging and food to the entire company for three days. This was no doubt deeply appreciated and desperately needed by everyone after such a harrowing ordeal.

8-9: Luke uses proper medical terms once again and distinguishes between the father of Publius being "healed" ("ιαομαι") ("ee-ah-oh-my") and others being "cured" ("θεραπευω") ("thera-peu-oh") meaning they received necessary medical attention to get well. Luke himself may have assisted Paul in these administrations as he notes himself as among those being honored (verse 10).

10-11: Somehow, the entire crew of the shipwreck was able to find quarters on Malta for three months. During this time, there was an "honoring" with "honors" for the apostles and possibly the crew. These would have been gifts from the people. There were no fees charged, so the people showed their gratitude by supplying gifts. From that time a vigorous Christian congregation grew on Malta no doubt revealing that Paul, Luke and Aristarchus spoke freely about the Gospel and many converts were won to Christ. There is an unconfirmed tradition that Publius also believed and became the leader of the early church there. As the end of February approached the following year

⁹² Jamieson, Fausset and Brown note: "But it is now ascertained that this was the proper official title of the Maltese representative of the Roman praetor to Sicily, to whose province Malta belonged; two inscriptions having been discovered in the island, one in Greek, the other in Latin, containing the same words which Luke here employs."

(61), Julius decided it was time to depart Malta on an Alexandrian ship wintering there readying to leave for Rome. Receiving provisions for the voyage from the people of Malta, they boarded this ship that bore the figures of Castor and Pollux (the “Gemini”)⁹³ on the bowsprit. Sailing season was once again open on the Mediterranean, although this was the very earliest time to be back on the sea.

12: Their first stop was “Syracuse”, the ancient capital of Sicily on the southeast side of the island, some eighty miles north of Malta, a long days sail, where they stayed three days. The reason for the three-day layover is not known, but it would either be a cargo or a weather matter. Weather is the most likely since their trip north was difficult due to a contrary wind (verse 13) and then Luke comments on the favorable wind in the same verse. Since Paul is regarded as the founder of the church on Sicily, no doubt he and his party did some evangelizing, as they were able. However, Paul was still a prisoner.

13: Rhegium is on the point of the “toe” of Italy’s “boot”, a trip normally of some sixty miles. But they were forced to “sail around” to get to Rhegium. This means they had to tack in “circles” to make headway. The trip took much longer than hoped. But staying in port for a day, they were favored the next day with a southerly wind (a wind from the south) that pushed them on to the main port of Rome, Puteoli, one hundred and eighty miles distant. With a good tail wind, this trip would only take a little over a day, or about thirty hours, sailing full time. Puteoli is on the northwest corner of the Bay of Naples, roughly a hundred miles (by land) south of Rome.

14: At Puteoli, it is likely that Julius sent the prisoners (with the exception of Paul, Luke and Aristarchus) on to Rome in the company of soldiers. He allowed the missionary band to stay in Puteoli with some believers for a week. The church had already been flourishing in Rome for some twenty- five years. Priscilla and Aquila had done an excellent job of building and encouraging the church over the years while they were in Rome. Up to this time, the couple had hosted the church in their home. It is not clear if they were still in the city or had moved to Ephesus during Paul’s long stay at Caesarea.

“And thus we came to Rome” is a statement, the journey of which, is described in the following verses.

28:15-16

15: And the brethren, when they heard about us, came from there as far as the Market of Appius and Three Inns to meet us; and when Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage. 16: When we entered Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier who was guarding him.

15: Brethren in Rome had heard about Paul’s arrival (possibly from the arrival of the other prisoners or soldiers) and went to meet him on the way. Some met him at Market (Forum) of Appius, forty-three miles from Rome and others met them as they came to “Three Inns” thirty miles from Rome. This places the entourage on the Appian Way. Those who came to see Paul at the Forum of Appius traveled along with him and were joined by others at three Inns and they all traveled together into Rome. Paul was very heartened by the arrival of so many brothers and

⁹³ The patron gods of sailors thought to bring good luck on the sea.

supporters. Julius and his company were quite sure that no escape or rescue attempt would take place and were under no threat.

16: At Rome it was time for Paul to separate from his companions and friends. It was a difficult parting. The “we” passages end with this verse. Paul was courteously escorted to the quarters of the guard who was assigned to him rather to the prison dungeons. Julius had been instrumental in taking care of Paul for the better part of seven months and continues to do so. It is now late March or early April of 61 A.D. Paul is now over sixty years old, possibly approaching seventy. He is in questionable health and physical condition. Those who insist that he was chained to a guard day and night for the next two years may be in error considering not only Paul’s age and condition, but the favor of the Centurion as well. Guarded, there is no question, and chained to a guard in public for a time seems probable. But the extent of the need to guard him had been well established, and it was minimal. Paul was an honorable man and trustworthy. Escape was not an option for Paul. There was a God given ministry to accomplish in Rome. It appears both Aristarchus and Luke, and perhaps others of Paul’s regular traveling companions like Timothy, Tychicus, and Trophimus were there as well. If not, they did arrive soon after as did Mark.⁹⁴

Nero is the Roman Emperor and had been so for seven years. He was now twenty-four years old and his rule, to this point, had been popular with the people. The beginnings of his dark nature and personal decline were not yet apparent.

28:17-22

17: After three days Paul called together those who were the leading men of the Jews, and when they came together, he *began* saying to them, "Brethren, though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. 18: "And when they had examined me, they were willing to release me because there was no ground for putting me to death. 19: "But when the Jews objected, I was forced to appeal to Caesar, not that I had any accusation against my nation. 20: "For this reason, therefore, I requested to see you and to speak with you, for I am wearing this chain for the sake of the hope of Israel." 21: They said to him, "We have neither received letters from Judea concerning you, nor have any of the brethren come here and reported or spoken anything bad about you. 22: "But we desire to hear from you what your views are; for concerning this sect, it is known to us that it is spoken against everywhere."

17-20: Near the Palatine, Paul was quartered and was allowed to invite the leading men of the Jews to meet with him. These would be men from among synagogue leadership and commercial or political leadership. He reviews his case to them expecting, it seems, for them to be familiar with it and Paul may assume they are ready to pursue it. Luke gives us a condensed version of the discussion. The attempt of the Jews in Jerusalem and Caesarea to kill him is left out. It is clear Paul’s purpose in this invitation was to present his case to them and find out what they had heard and what their intentions were.

21-22: Surprisingly, though they were not familiar with Paul, they had heard of the “sect”⁹⁵ to which he belonged. Christianity was well rooted in Rome, and those who had fled during Claudius’

⁹⁴ See “THE TIMING OF PAUL’S LETTERS”, C.a. page 187

⁹⁵ “ἁιρεσις” (Heresis) is the word we get “heresy” from and means “choice”, “faction”, “sect” etc.

reign had now returned under the “tolerance” policy of Nero. The church had a negative reputation (by way of rumor) among the Jews, but these men wanted to hear about it first hand. This was an unexpected surprise for Paul and it seems he did not expect God to fulfill His word in this fashion.

28:23-29

23: When they had set a day for Paul, they came to him at his lodging in large numbers; and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening. 24: Some were being persuaded by the things spoken, but others would not believe. 25: And when they did not agree with one another, they *began* leaving after Paul had spoken one *parting* word, "The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers, 26: saying, 'GO TO THIS PEOPLE AND SAY, "YOU WILL KEEP ON HEARING, BUT WILL NOT UNDERSTAND; AND YOU WILL KEEP ON SEEING, BUT WILL NOT PERCEIVE; 27: FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL, AND WITH THEIR EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR, AND THEY HAVE CLOSED THEIR EYES; OTHERWISE THEY MIGHT SEE WITH THEIR EYES, AND HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART AND RETURN, AND I WOULD HEAL THEM.'" 28: "Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will also listen." 29 [When he had spoken these words, the Jews departed, having a great dispute among themselves.]

23-29: A considerable number of the Jews came to Paul’s quarters at the barracks to hear him speak of this “sect” and Paul spent the day in discussion with them. It had to have been exasperating for Paul as it appears from verses 25-28 that most were not persuaded. His approach to them had been one consisting of “friendly pathos” (reflecting the Greek of Luke). Those that were persuaded assuredly brought joy to the aging apostle. The quotation is from Isaiah 6:9-10 and is from the LXX. These Jews apparently did not find anything worthy of charges to Roman authorities and neither was there Jewish opposition in Rome as there was in Israel. After all, they asked for his understanding and, though they debated among themselves, there were no hard feelings toward Paul. Verse 29 is not found in the earliest manuscripts and is redundant considering verse 25.

28:30-31

30: And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him, 31: preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.

30-31: Luke’s conclusion is revealing. However, reconciling the sequence of historical events and Paul’s writings during these and the next few years is difficult. What follows is a combination of facts and conjecture during these “two years” and following.

First, Luke tells us Paul was able to leave the compound and find a place to reside at his own

expense. Was he fully released? Could his trial have been dismissed by simple default?⁹⁶ If so, this means that he may well have found work in order to pay his own expenses as Luke suggests, (“his own rented quarters”).

Second, it seems reasonable that Paul received visitors from abroad and wrote some letters from Rome during this time. The likely early candidates are Colossians, Philemon and the lost letter to Laodicea, if indeed they were not written from Caesarea during his imprisonment there. This will be discussed below. If written from Rome during his first imprisonment there, he is expecting to leave as he tells Philemon, “... prepare me a lodging, for I hope that through your prayers I will be given to you.” Later he tells the same thing to the church at Philippi (See: “fifth” below).

Third, it seems apparent that after some time, Luke and Aristarchus left Paul in the hands of others. Paul may have recovered enough to be able to fend for himself and supply his own income. It seems likely that Priscilla (Prisca) and Aquila may well still be in Rome. However, sometime during or shortly after Paul’s first Roman residency, they returned to Ephesus. They may have accompanied Paul on his fourth Journey and remained at Ephesus as Paul continued on to Macedonia and beyond.

There seems to be no concern for Paul in Luke’s final statements here, and his conclusion appears general, abrupt and incomplete as it fails to proceed on and record the great apostle’s death. Luke may have completed his narrative(s) “as is” during the stay in Rome prior to departing. There would be no reason for Luke to actually stay with Paul. A strong tradition exists that Luke returned through Macedonia to Philippi, then on to Troas and finally Ephesus. Later, he rejoined Paul in his last days at Rome before finally returning to Ephesus where he died years later. His tomb exists there today.

Fourth, after Luke and Aristarchus left, Paul may have been given a hearing in which he made a defense in which he states that he was alone. A note in his second letter to Timothy written from a later Roman imprisonment may refer to this hearing. More likely, this “hearing” was during his second imprisonment.⁹⁷ After a hearing during his first Roman imprisonment/residency, he may have been set free. Two years passed and possibly more. We are now likely in 63-64 A.D.

Fifth, It seems that Timothy and Epaphroditus (who brought the “gifts” from Philippi) joined Paul in Rome (Philippians 1:1 and 2:19-25), either before his “first defense” or shortly after. The arrival

⁹⁶ This continues to be debated. Many scholars feel that Paul still was loosely guarded, but not chained. Among them: Jamieson, Fausset and Brown; G.H.C. Macgregor, *Interpreter’s Bible Commentary*; Benjamin Robinson, “Life of Paul”; Philip Schaff, “History of the Christian Church”; Johannes Munck, “The Acts of The Apostles”. Gunther Bornkamm, “Paul”, Harper and Row, 1971, page 104, notes that there is no hint he is a prisoner but adds that he was still guarded, though free of chains and free to receive guests. Why he says this is not stated. On the one hand, this argument may well be true and explain why Paul was in Rome for two years. On the other hand, his stay at Rome may well have been to fulfill the Lord’s will for him. He could have been totally free. The fact that Luke mentions the two years with no following event(s) (such as his execution) reveals that Paul may have left Rome afterward. See excursus following: “Did Paul Travel To Spain?”

⁹⁷ This seems the most reasonable way to view this letter – as one of Paul’s last letters prior to his execution after a second Roman imprisonment. Paul says, “At my *first defense* no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them. But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was rescued out of the lion’s mouth.” (II Timothy 4:16-17 italics mine). However, rather than referring to his first imprisonment at Rome, Paul could easily have been referring to a first defense during his second Roman imprisonment.

of Timothy and Epaphroditis prompted Paul to write his epistle to the Philippians, a beloved group that he had not heard from in a very long time (Philippians 4:10-16, 1:1-14, 2:17-30). It is clear that he was able to leave Rome at this time. In addition, Paul notes in Philippians 2:24 (written from Rome) that he trusts the Lord that he will come to them shortly. Timothy and Epaphroditus cannot be blamed for “abandoning Paul” as he sent them both on to their missions (2:19-25). But there is no question that at the hearing mentioned in II Timothy 4 that Paul felt very alone.

In considering the books of Colossians and Philemon as written from Caesarea, the issue is, that those Paul lists as being with him at the time of the writing of Colossians include: Aristarchus, Mark, Luke, Demas and Tychicus and Onesimus both from Colossae. “Demas” is noted as one of the companions of Paul in both Colossians and Philemon. True, these events and letters could have taken place at Rome during these “two years” as many conclude, but the inclusion of Mark and Demas seems out of place. By the time of the writing of these letters, reconciliation has occurred between Paul and Mark (Barnabas' cousin) and Barnabas himself. The most likely place for this to occur would be in Israel and thus Caesarea. Later, during Paul’s final imprisonment, Paul asks Timothy to bring Mark with him (II Timothy 4:10). Mark was not in Rome at the writing of this letter but rather in Ephesus. Did Mark visit Paul in Rome during his first imprisonment and then go to Ephesus at some time? Or did Mark visit Paul at Caesarea and then go to Ephesus at a later time from which Paul summoned him?

But also in II Timothy 4:10, Paul is very unhappy with Demas and says, “... Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica;...”.

This shows either: A. The time between the letters was quite long, B. Confirms two Roman imprisonments, C. That the relationship between Paul and Demas deteriorated between the two times Demas was in Rome, D. That Demas fell out of favor between the two letters. All of this will be discussed more thoroughly in the following excurses.

The Book of Acts concludes without mentioning these letters or any other activity Paul was engaged in during or after the “two years” had expired, roughly mid 61-63 A.D.. So it remains to other writings and traditions to fill in the completion of Paul’s ministry and life. But we must recognize that the Book of Acts is not the history of Paul but the history of the early church. Luke’s goal is complete as he relates the story of “all that Jesus began to do and to teach” (1:1). The gospel has reached the empire and its capital, Rome. It remains to others outside of Luke’s scope to determine the remaining story of Paul’s ministry and life.

EXCURSUS

WHAT DID PAUL DO BETWEEN 63 A.D. AND 68 A.D. OR TO THE TIME WHEN WAS EXECUTED IN ROME UNDER NERO?

Here are the two possible scenarios:

SCENARIO I

Paul remained in Rome but was later re-arrested when Nero began a regional persecution of Christians in late 64 A.D.- early 65 A.D. after the fire in Rome. If this is true, then

Paul, after a brief time in his own rented quarters, was re-arrested and languished in prison for an additional four or five years before being executed in 67-68 A.D. prior to Nero's suicide on June 9, 68 A.D. What is the evidence for this scenario?

Clement of Rome (A.D. 30-101), a half a century later is often referenced as suggesting that both Paul and Peter were executed at this time in Rome. But he states no such thing. He only notes that Peter and Paul left this world and went to the "Holy place" (I Clement - to the Corinthians c. 95 A.D.)

Ignatius is cited in support of Peter and Paul being in Rome and states to the church at Rome, "...I do not order you as did Peter and Paul" (Ignatius to the Romans 4:3 c. 115A.D.) But this does not bear evidence that Peter was ever in Rome. It may suggest that Peter wrote to the church there, but solid evidence is lacking for either of these conclusions.

Dionysius, bishop of Corinth, wrote of Peter and Paul, "Both planted in our Corinth and likewise taught us; and likewise they taught together in Italy and were martyred on the same occasion" (Eusebius History II.25.8). But since Peter had nothing to do with the founding of the church at Corinth other than being mentioned in Paul's first letter to the church, the remainder of the account of Dionysius is suspect especially as it is written well over one hundred years after the fact.

Irenaeus (c. 185 A.D.) speaks of "Peter and Paul preaching at Rome...and laying the foundations of the church". This of course is not supported by the facts. The church in Rome was well under way before either the apostles or Paul ever left Jerusalem. Even later writers continue the tradition that Peter died in Rome including Tertullian (c. 200 A.D.), and Origen (c. 230 A.D. who stated Peter was crucified "head downwards"). But there is little, if any, history to support these claims and they seem to have snowballed from an erroneous tradition early on. Yet, tradition cannot be discounted altogether, especially from these notable men. So we are left with uncertainty.

It seems odd that Paul, during the height of Nero's persecution would be imprisoned while so many Christians were being burned at the stake and killed. If he were killed at the end of the two years, why did not Luke record it? Tradition states that Paul was beheaded on the Ostia Way outside of Rome in 64 A.D., but this account and the year are uncertain. If Paul was free in 63 A.D. to stay or leave, he either stayed and supported Christians as the Neronian persecution began, was arrested and executed within the next two to five years, or he had left Rome. How would Paul know this persecution would occur? There were no signs of this in 63. On the other hand, Paul could have left before the persecutions began and returned at their height to add support or plead the cause of the church at Rome to no avail.

Priscilla and Aquila were long gone to Ephesus by the time Paul either arrived at Rome or shortly thereafter. Paul writes greets them at Ephesus in his second letter to Timothy from a Roman prison (4:19). Perhaps they, seeing the "handwriting on the wall" left Rome as the persecution began. Otherwise, they may have simply returned to Ephesus to support the difficult work there because the church was under attack, unless of course, they accompanied Paul on a fourth journey which passed through Ephesus where they elected to stay.

The tradition that Paul was in Rome and suffered a severe imprisonment there is attested to by his own words, as is his imminent death (II Timothy 2:8-10, 4:6-8). This is not in question. It is the “when” that is under debate.

SCENARIO II

Paul, sometime in 63-64 A.D. left Rome and completed a “fourth” missionary journey. There is evidence that this actually took place.

First, the book of Acts ends with no worries about Paul or his future. In fact, it looks very positive.

Second, Paul noted several times that he expected to visit certain people and churches (Philippians 1:21-26, 2:24; Philemon 1:22, I Timothy 3:14-15).

Third, Paul writes certain details that are not accounted for in Luke’s narrative. For example, to Titus he wrote, “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you...”. This starts clearly that Paul was in Crete and that he had take Titus with him and left him there to lead the church. When did this happen? Could it have been on his trip after he left Spain? In the same letter, Paul tells Titus, “When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, make every effort to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. Diligently help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way so that nothing is lacking for them” - Titus 3:12-13.⁹⁸

This gives us more evidence that Paul was free at some time after the first Roman imprisonment/residency. He likely writes this letter from Macedonia or Corinth, at the same time he writes I Timothy. Paul expects to arrive at Nicopolis and meet Titus there at some later date. He is going to send either Artemas or Tychicus to Crete relieving Titus so Titus can come to him. Thus, both these men are with Paul at the time of this writing.

After his work in Crete, Paul writes (II Timothy 4:10) that Titus had gone to Dalmatia. So, some time has transpired between Paul writing to Titus and his second letter to Timothy.

Speaking of Spain, Paul wrote to the church at Rome from Corinth at the close of his third missionary journey, “but now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you whenever I go to **Spain**--for I hope to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for a while--but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints. For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. Yes, they were pleased *to do so*, and they are indebted to them.

⁹⁸ Titus, one of Paul’s “partners and fellow workers” (throughout Paul’s ministry) had had a very important role in the Corinthian Church (II Corinthians, chapters seven and eight).

For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things. Therefore, when I have finished this, and have put my seal on this fruit of theirs, I will go on by way of you to **Spain**.” Romans 15:23-28 This does not sound like prayerful speculation but like a definite plan.

To Timothy (I Timothy 1:3) Paul writes, “As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines, nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than *furthering* the administration of God which is by faith.”

Examining the ministry at Ephesus during the third missionary journey in Acts 19 and 20, Timothy’s role in this letter is not consistent with the narrative of Luke. In fact they are contradictory. In Acts 19 Timothy is sent away to Macedonia and later after Paul leaves Ephesus, he meets Timothy in Macedonia (20:1-4). He didn’t visit Ephesus again unless it was during a “fourth” journey.

During this “fourth” journey he could have also visited Philemon, the church at Colossae, and Timothy could have accompanied him on the journey until they reached Ephesus. He is mentioned as being with Paul in Paul’s letters to Colossae, Philemon and Philippi. As it has been noted these letters were likely written from Rome during Paul’s first imprisonment and Timothy was there (see comment on 28:30-31 “fifth”). As Timothy was a frequent traveling companion of Paul’s, he could have left Rome with Paul and traveled on this “fourth” journey.

Fourth, a strong tradition exists that he went to Spain at this time and a church of St. Paul exists in Spain and commemorates his visit there. Clement of Rome (A.D. 30-101) suggests he Paul went to Spain when he stated Paul went to “the limits of the West”. Spain is the western most country in Europe. Also indicating that Paul went to Spain or that Christianity came to Spain is the Muratorian fragment (c. 190 A.D.), Irenaus, Tertullian, and Arnobius. Eusebius suggests (Ecclesiastical History, 2.22.2-3) that Paul was released from his first Roman imprisonment.

Fifth, the personalities with Paul at Rome in his letters indicate two separate imprisonments.

Sixth, the tenor or tone of Paul’s letters indicate two separate imprisonments. In Philippians, Colossians, Philemon Paul is upbeat, hopeful of visiting them. He is free to travel in I Timothy and Titus, but in II Timothy, the mood has changed. Though in prison, he is not expecting to be released but instead asks that others come to him before he is “poured out”.

END OF EXCURSUS

THE TIMING OF PAUL'S LETTERS

A chronology of events and letters based on people addressed by Paul, mentioned by Paul or in Paul's company.

- I. To Paul's first major imprisonment – Caesarea; summer of 58 to late August or early September of 60 A.D. and his trip to Rome.
 - A. Journeying to Jerusalem with Paul were: Luke, Aristarchus, Gaius, Tychicus, Timothy, Trophimus, Sopater and Secundus, (Acts 20:4) unless one or more disembarked at Patara or another city on the way from Miletus (Acts 21). This is unlikely. We know that Trophimus was with him in Jerusalem. (21:29). Now, how many stayed in Jerusalem during the time Paul was arrested in the temple grounds (21:33)? Likely all of them. And when he was transported to Caesarea a week or two later? We know that Luke and Aristarchus stayed on and possibly others as well for a time. But the entire two years? Gaius no longer appears in the New Testament, so he may well have returned to Derbe and remained there.⁹⁹ This brings us to some of the letters.
 - B. The timing of the Paul's letters to the churches at Ephesus, Colossians, Laodicea, to Philemon, Titus and both of his to Timothy are up for debate. Did he write any of these letters from Caesarea? It is nearly inconceivable that for two years Paul wrote no letters and received no visitors from abroad. We know the letter to Laodicea was written (Colossians 4:16) and apparently lost unless its contents are hidden in another letter somewhere. We also know that the letters to Colossae, Laodicea and Philemon were written as a package and delivered by Tychicus (Col. 4:7). The letter to Ephesus may also have been in this package (Ephesians 6:21). The letters to Colossae, Philemon, and Ephesus evidence some unique characteristics. Primarily these include the people who are with Paul at the time of his writing, as well as the people he greets and the personal circumstances he is experiencing. Were they written from Caesarea or were they written from Rome during his imprisonment there? Let's examine the Caesarea origination.
 - a. The letters to Colossae and Philemon state that with him at the time of writing are: Timothy (Col. 1:1); Epaphras (Col. 1:7, 4:12); Tychicus; Aristarchus, Mark, Jesus called Justus, Onesimus, Luke, and Demas (Col. 4:7-14). In Caesarea, Luke, Timothy and Aristarchus were there. John Mark and Paul are reconciled now and this is likely to have happened in Caesarea as both Mark and Barnabas are closer to Caesarea than to Rome. Mark lived in Jerusalem. Barnabas was a traveler and frequented Jerusalem. So that leaves Onesimus, Epaphras Demas and Justus. It is conceivable that Onesimus left Colossae and was overtaken by Epaphras and brought to Caesarea to see Paul or that Onesimus had come to Paul, been converted and then Epaphras met him when he also came to see Paul. Apparently Epaphras had undertaken the mission to get

⁹⁹ Neither Gaius of Corinth (or Macedonia) nor Gaius of Derbe are mentioned again in the New Testament with the exception of a "Gaius" in III John 1:1. This "Gaius" might be linked with Gaius of Corinth, but the connection is tenuous. John calls him "The Elder" and the "beloved" and a teacher of the truth.

Paul's help on the teaching at Colossae (Gnostic, 2:4). Paul notes that Epaphras, a founder of the church there at Colossae came to him with concerns (Col. 4:13). Paul writes back to the church at Colossae as well as to Philemon and sends the letters by the hand of Tychicus.

In his letter to Philemon Paul notes that with him are: Timothy, Onesimus (about whom the letter is written), Epaphras, Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke. Tychicus is not mentioned, but since both letters are going to Colossae it is not necessary. In both letters Paul greets Archippus (Col. 4:17, Ph. 1:2). In Col. 4:9 Paul notes he is sending Onesimus with Tychicus. This is confirmed in Philemon 1:12. So there is no question that both letters were written at the same time, from the same place and that Paul was in prison at the time.

Next we have Paul's clear statement that he has never met with these churches face to face (Col. 2:1, 1:4, 1:7-8). It is fair to say however, that during Paul's stay at Ephesus that many of these people came into Ephesus and became acquainted with or close to Paul. He greets several of them in a way that cannot be explained except through an established friendship or relationship.

b. All well and good ...except...could this have actually happened at Caesarea? Paul makes a few other comments that don't fit this possibility very well.

First, Paul notes in Col 4:10 that Aristarchus is his "fellow prisoner". There is no record by Luke that Aristarchus was ever arrested and imprisoned. In Philemon 1:23 He also note that Epaphras is his fellow prisoner and again, no record of this exists. Conversely, in Col. 4:12, Epaphras is only mentioned as "...one of your number, a bondslave of Jesus Christ,..." but not as a prisoner while in Philemon 1:24 Aristarchus is mentioned as a fellow worker but not a prisoner. Now Aristarchus, one of Paul's caregivers could have voluntarily joined Paul in his confinement, but Epaphras is another matter altogether. Even in Paul's first Roman imprisonment this makes no sense, and yet most scholars place the writing of these letters at that time. An answer may lie in the Greek word Paul uses for both men. Instead of using the word "δεσμιος" ("des-mi-os") he employs to describe his own imprisonment¹⁰⁰, he uses the word "συναιχμαλωτος" ("soon-ike-mal-o-tos") meaning "one held captive" or "led to captivity".¹⁰¹ Therefore one could reasonably conclude that these men were held captive not by the authorities but by their own choice as the Lord led them. On the other hand, Paul includes these men when he tells the church at Colossae that Tychicus will inform them about "our circumstances" (4:7-9).

¹⁰⁰ Paul uses this word every time he describes his own imprisonment. It means, "to be bound or chained".

¹⁰¹ Paul is consistent in contrasting his "imprisonment" with their "captivity" in the Greek.

Second, Paul refers to himself as “Paul the aged” (Philemon 1:9), indicating advanced years. Although he may have been in his mid-sixties at Caesarea, this is an unusual description of himself, indeed it is unique. Paul continued to work on as strongly as he could for nearly the next decade. In his first Roman experience, he was in his late sixties and Luke makes no note regarding any debilitated condition or age. The answer probably lies in his establishing his authority in the matter with Philemon. The word he uses for “aged” is “πρεσβυτερος”, (“pres-bu-ter-os”) the common word he uses for “elder” and uses when establishing leadership in the churches. He is simply stating to Philemon that he carries the honor of being an elder in the ecclesiastical sense of the word.

Third, Paul tells Philemon, “...prepare me a lodging, for I hope that through your prayers I will be given to you.” This shows expectation of release and does not fit in at all with a Caesarean imprisonment but rather with the first Roman imprisonment (Note: Acts 28:30-31). Unless Paul expected a quick voyage and an even quicker adjudication, this is a odd request. It sounds as if Paul’s visit to Philemon at Colossae is immanent. Indeed, Paul was in no doubt about having to go to Rome from Caesarea.

c. The similarities of the letter to the church at Ephesus with Colossians and Philemon are: 1. That Tychicus is the person who makes the delivery. Paul writes a similar statement about him as he does in the other two, “But that you also may know about my circumstances, how I am doing, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make everything known to you. I have sent him to you for this very purpose, so that you may know about us, and that he may comfort your hearts (6:21-22). Notice the similarity to Col. 4:8, “*For* I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts...” 2. Paul mentions he is a prisoner (3:1; 4:1;6:20). 3. The theme regarding relationships is very similar (compare Ephesians 5:22-6:9 with Col. 3:17-22) as are other instructions. However, not one companion or friend is listed nor are there greeting for other people as in Colossians.

This discrepancy may simply be due to Paul’s intending the letter to be circulated to other congregations in the region as Ephesus included a territory and not just a city. This is based on 1:15 where Paul says he has “heard of their love”, and 1:1 where the address “at Ephesus” is not found in some of the earliest manuscripts. But with Tychicus bringing the letter, the historical context strongly suggests that believers in the Ephesian region may well be included, such as those at Miletus, Smyrna, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and so on. Finally, he oddly omits personal greetings to those “at Ephesus” and references to those with him.

d. From the statement of Paul in II Timothy 4:12 that he has sent Tychicus to Ephesus, one might speculate that this trip included the aforementioned letters as well so the assumption would be that Tychicus

only took one trip, II Timothy being written at the same time as these other letters.

The thing that challenges this is that in II Timothy several people are mentioned and the context is quite different. First, Demas, rather than be known as a fellow worker has instantly changed into a deserter between letters. Timothy is (In the second letter) being asked to come to Paul perhaps leaving the ministry in the hands of others at Ephesus (II Timothy 2:2, 4:9-13). In I Timothy he is asked to conduct the future ministry at Ephesus. The list goes on. So as Paul mentions Tychicus trip to Ephesus in II Timothy, this has to be a later, additional trip. The distinct differences regarding Paul's second letter to Timothy are discussed below.

If none of these letters were written from Caesarea, then what letter(s), if any, could have been written from there? This is a curiosity of which we may never be able to glean the answers. It has been suggested that perhaps Philippians was written from Caesarea. In Philippians Paul is in prison (1:7,13,14,17), Timothy is with him (1:1), it had been a while since he had heard from them. The gift for the offering at Jerusalem seems to be mentioned (4:10; 4:15).

The things that Paul states to dismiss this possibility are formidable. 1. He mentions his relationship with the "Praetorian Guard" (1:13), he is concerned about whether he will live to see them again (1:18-24), yet has a confidence that he will indeed see them again (1:25-26). He expresses concern for some unnamed possible defectors or infidels (3:18-19), and closes with, "Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household." These statements fit best with the time of his first imprisonment and suggest nearly undeniably that he was at Rome. So we are left with the question, were any letters written from Caesarea? Perhaps they did not survive if they had been written.

- C. The letters to Timothy and Titus also exhibit special characteristics including the people who are with Paul at the time of the writing, the people he greets and the personal circumstances he is experiencing. But they reveal a different atmosphere than Ephesians, Colossians or Philemon. They are called "The Pastoral Epistles" because they address both men in their leadership role over the churches they serve.

Up to this point neither of these men are seen in this role. So their leadership must follow the rest of Paul's writings. When Paul other letters and mentioned either Titus or Timothy, they were always with him or being sent on a mission as an emissary and to return to Paul with news.

Some of the distinctives of the letter to Titus include:

- a. Only Titus is in the address. Titus is to organize the church there in Paul's absence and "set in order what remains" (1:5). This indicates missionary work done on Crete at some length by Paul and Titus along with the help of Apollos and Zenas, a "lawyer"(3:13). Zena is a new name not mentioned anywhere else.

- b. Paul mentions that Artemas and Tychicus are with him but no mention of any other companion by name only to say, “All who are with me greet you” (3:15). Artemas is another new worker who is mentioned nowhere else. Paul is deciding to send either man to Crete to relieve Titus so he can meet up with Paul in Nicopolis, a city mentioned no where else located on the northwest coast of Greece.
- c. Paul is free to travel (3:12). This could only have occurred between two Roman imprisonments. Luke mentions none of this and the circumstances leave little room for a visit like this one with new workers prior to the conclusion of Luke’s narrative.
- d. Paul does not mention any imprisonment, but expects to meet Titus at Nicopolis where he expects to spend the winter. This is the first and only mention of Nicopolis in the New Testament.

Some of the distinctives of I Timothy include:

- a. No other person is addressed in the letter except Timothy himself.
- b. He mentions no other companions with him by name but someone must have acted as the amanuensis.
- c. Timothy was left by Paul in Ephesus as the leader or pastor of the church there (1:3). Paul had gone on to Macedonia.
- d. There is no mention of being in prison or confined but notes his ability to travel and may be traveling at the time of the writing (1:3; 3:14-15).
- e. He mentions Hymenaeus and Alexander who have caused him grief (1:20; II Timothy 2:16-18; Acts 19:33; II Timothy 4:14). This places the destination of the letter to Ephesus.
- f. The church is well structures with established offices of Elder, Deacon and Widow as well as other leaders.

This places the writing of this epistle later in Paul’s ministry. Though Paul and Timothy were in Ephesus, Paul going to Macedonia from there (Acts 20:1-5), it is a stretch to state that Timothy was left at Ephesus and joined Paul later after a pastoral ministry and I Timothy was written. It makes no sense when the rest of Luke’s narrative is considered. So this had to be another time.

Some of the distinctives of II Timothy include:

- a. Paul is in prison in Rome (1:17).
- b. With him are or have recently been Luke, Tychicus, Demas, Crescens, Titus, Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudia and Onesiphorus. It appears that he also had visitors from the Church of Rome (of which some of these names may have belonged – 4:21) Many of these people are new to Paul and seem to have some familiarity with Timothy.

- c. Paul mentions leaving Trophimus “sick at Miletus” (4:20). This did not occur on the third journey as Trophimus was with Paul when he arrived at Jerusalem (Acts 21:29).
- d. He mentions Erastus remaining at Corinth (II Timothy 4:20). This suggests that Paul passed through Corinth with Erastus. This indeed did occur (see: Acts 19:21-22; 20:1-4). But it does not fit with Trophimus being left sick at Miletus.
- e. He greets Prisca and Aquila they are back in Ephesus. In I Timothy, there is no greeting to them.
- f. Paul mentions that Phygelus and Hermogenes were among those who turned away from him in Asia. When did this happen? Only on a subsequent ministry there as no mention of these men or of anything of the sort made by Luke.
- g. Paul greets Onesiphorus and his household. This is a new name to the mix and the church at Ephesus may be meeting in his house.
- h. He mentions, “At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them.” This seems to be describing a “first” defense during his second Roman imprisonment, not his first imprisonment/residency.

A SEMI-FICTIONAL SCENARIO OF PAUL’S FOURTH JOURNEY BASED ON THESE DISCOVERIES

1. Accompanying him to Rome for sure were Luke and Aristarchus. Priscilla and Aquila were probably still living in Rome and gave Paul a place to work so he could earn income to support himself. He was either accompanied to Rome or joined there also by Timothy. Later, Tychicus, Trophimus, Mark (John Mark, Barnabas cousin), and Demas join Paul at Rome. We know little of the origin of Demas but he may have been from Thessalonica and a friend of Aristarchus (II Timothy 4:9).
2. During this time Luke compiles and finishes work on his two volumes. Mark arrives with his written gospel. Mark’s work may have been in process or already complete while Paul was in Caesarea and where Paul and Mark were reconciled with the help of Barnabas. Luke’s work, following Mark’s, adds details Mark excludes, especially the narrative of the history and circumstances surrounding the birth of John the Baptist and Jesus as well as the early years.
3. Paul, able to receive visitors entertained Epaphroditus from Philippi who brought gifts from the church to him as well as news. This was early in his incarceration but Timothy had arrived to be with him. The aging apostle is filled with joy at receiving this visit. Paul writes to the church and sends the letter back to Philippi by the hand of Epaphroditus.
4. He receives a visit from Epaphras of Colossae who is accompanied by Onesimus. He writes a personal hand written note to Philemon about Onesimus, a full letter to Philemon’s church at Colossae as well as a letter to Laodicea. He sends them by the hand of Tychicus accompanied by Onesimus. Epaphras decides to stay at Rome with Paul.

5. His case is dismissed for lack of accusers and evidence. Paul's health improves. Luke and Aristarchus leave Paul and return to their own cities. Aristarchus returns to Thessalonica and Luke to Troas and Ephesus by way of Macedonia and Philippi.
6. Remaining with Paul are Timothy, Trophimus, Mark, Epaphras, Demas and his Roman friends, especially Aquila and Priscilla. Artemas may have been one of these as well as Zenas. Titus arrives at Rome, probably from Antioch of Syria. Apollos as well as Erastus may have come to Rome and accompanied Paul on his upcoming journey (II Timothy 4:20). The other possibility is that Apollos went to Crete sometime on his own (or with Zenas – whom he could have actually met on Crete) and had begun a ministry there. Thus, Apollos and Zenas would not be in Rome with Paul.
7. It is c.63-64 A.D. and Nero is beginning to slip. On July 19, 64 A.D. a disastrous fire breaks out in the city of Rome. Nearly a quarter of the city is burned. Though the rumor is that Nero set the fire himself to make room for his building and artistic interests, Nero throws suspicion upon the Christians in the city. A persecution begins. In light of these events, Paul, Prisca, Aquila, Timothy, Trophimus, Mark, Epaphras, Titus, Demas and possibly Erastus, Artemas, Apollos and Zenas pack up and set out for Spain. Paul takes along several scrolls, and a cloak as items among his belongings.
8. After a ministry in Spain, the troop heads for Crete. There a missionary effort establishes a growing church and Titus, Apollos and Zenas stay to minister there while the rest head to Asia. At Miletus, Trophimus becomes ill and cannot continue on. Paul continues on to Ephesus, and Prisca, Aquila, Timothy, and Mark decide to remain there as Paul cannot stay due to a rising persecution against him. Alexander the coppersmith harms him (II Timothy 4:14) and Phygelus and Hermogenes turn away from him as do all Asia (II Timothy 1:15). Paul places Timothy as the leading teacher in the church there and leaves for Troas. Accompanying him are Tychicus (with whom he reunites at Ephesus), Demas, Erastus and Artemas. He also reunites with Luke somewhere along the way and is accompanied also by one "Crescens" at some time. The six of them stay at Troas with Carpus and Paul leaves his cloak there and a selection of scrolls, some of expensive parchment. It is likely summer in Troas when Paul and his troop are there and it is about 65 A.D.
9. From Troas Paul and his companions travel through Macedonia and south to Greece where Paul stays at Corinth. Along the way, or at Corinth, he receives word about conditions at Crete and at Ephesus. He writes I Timothy. Timothy is a little over his head and Paul encourages him. Gnosticism has taken root everywhere and grown over the last few years. He writes to Titus and asks him to leave Crete and meet him at Nicopolis where he plans to spend the winter. He is going to send either Tychicus or Artemas there to replace him. He also asks that Titus to make sure Zenas and Apollos have everything they need as they are also leaving Crete. Paul ends up sending Artemas to Crete. Tychicus stays with Paul.
10. Paul heads to Nicopolis. He has with him Luke, Tychicus, Demas and Crescens as Erastus stays in Corinth, his home.¹⁰² Paul goes to this new city for a special purpose, perhaps

¹⁰² It is feasible in this rendering that the team went to Nicopolis first and then to Corinth, Titus staying to minister in Nicopolis, in Illyricum and on to Dalmatia.

invited there to share the word.¹⁰³ Titus meets him there. The ministry continues in Nicopolis. Perhaps both Zenas and Apollos came there as well. From Nicopolis, Titus heads north to Dalmatia. We can estimate the year as c. 65-66 A.D.

11. Here we lose track. Paul ends up back at Rome. We cannot be sure of the reason. Perhaps the aging apostle (now near or in his seventies) with little thought to his own life, returns to minister to those suffering under the horrific persecution by Nero. This is most likely as later Luke and Tychicus are in Rome with him. The Lord's words, in Acts 27:24, if not fulfilled before, are surely fulfilled at this imprisonment, "Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar". The Jewish war breaks out in Israel and Jews are not "in favor" let alone Christian Jews.
12. Whatever the reason, Paul is arrested and found in Rome at the end of his life having been placed in a Dungeon to await his fate. He is cold, but able to receive visitors. Somewhere between Nicopolis and Paul's Roman imprisonment, Demas returned to Thessalonica and Crescens to Galatia leaving only Luke with Paul in his darkest time (II Timothy 4:9-11). News of his imprisonment gets out. Onesiphorus of Ephesus comes to visit him and he brought "refreshing" to Paul (II Timothy 1:16). He is apparently given a hearing at some time and it does not turn out well. He is bitter that no one was there to support him (except Luke and Tychicus).
13. From here Paul pens II Timothy. In it he mentions his new friends who have now come to care for him: Eubulus, Pudens, Linus and Claudia as well as all the brethren still alive in Rome. Tychicus is also there. His letter is filled with personal pain as well as his hope in Christ. He is ready to be poured out as a drink offering, and the time of his departure has come. He tells Timothy, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing". His letter is, at times, disconnected and rambling while clear and concise at other times.
14. He asks Timothy to come to him as soon as possible (4:9). He implores Timothy to "join him in suffering for the gospel" (1:8) and to "suffer hardship with me" (2:3-13). He seems to feel he still has some time with which to await and meet with Timothy and Mark. He even asks Timothy to pass through Troas to pick up the cloak and scrolls he left there so he may have them. Perhaps this is due to the time Nero is out of Italy in Greece. Paul sends Tychicus to Ephesus possibly to bring the letter there and relieve Timothy so Timothy can come to Rome.
15. In 67-68, Nero is on an extended "good will" tour of Greece participating in various contests that he conveniently wins and begins the work of completing a canal through the Isthmus of Corinth that fails. In the spring of 68 Revolts break out in Gaul, Spain and Africa. Nero returns to Rome and is an ineffective and mad leader. A few months later he flees Rome and on June 9, 68 A.D. commits suicide. Paul is martyred either in 66-67 before

¹⁰³ It is within the framework of Paul's letters that he had visited this area before and was now returning to the work there. His comment in Romans 15:19 gives us this information. When he visited there prior to writing the book of Romans is not mentioned by either Luke or Paul, but it sounds as if he had just been there prior to the writing of this book (15:15-25).

Nero goes on this campaign or during the time he returns to Rome (68) prior to his suicide. The latter is favored for reasons given above.

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