

NOTES FROM THE BOOK OF ACTS

KJV 1611 text

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JT Sessions

ACTS CHAPTER ONE

The book of Acts was written by Luke and contains a record of the doings of Peter and Paul. It is a transition book in that God's plan is changing from the Jewish law to the Church under grace. Be sure to notice the change as it moves from Peter's message at Pentecost to the calling out of Paul on the Damascus road. Pay special attention to what God said to Ananias in Acts 9:15. That is a good verse to commit to memory. Peter was to open the doors of the Christian church to both Jews and Gentiles, and Paul was chosen to bear the gospel especially to the Gentile world. These two apostles were the leading force in founding and organizing the Christian church. Only occasional notice is given of the other apostles works and their deaths, except that of James in Ac 12:2.

1 The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,

That "former treatise" spoken of would be the Book of Luke.

2 Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen:

Instructions were given to the apostles by the Holy Spirit as at first they had no New Testament. Now, instructions come to Christians from the bible and from the Holy Spirit.

3 To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things

pertaining to the kingdom of God:

There were four steps to becoming an apostle. First, they were chosen by the Lord. None were self appointed. He commissioned them and gave them specific instructions. He showed Himself to them after His resurrection. Finally, He promised them the Holy Spirit to provide them the power they would need to do His work. BTW, the word infallible has been changed in the corrupt versions. Apparently, according to them, proofs given by God are no longer infallible.

4 And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.

This is not a commandment not to ever leave Jerusalem but rather to wait until the Holy Ghost was given to them. We are getting very close to the beginning of the Christian Church here for when the Holy Ghost comes to permanently indwell the believers then we have a church.

5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

Notice that no baptism with fire is mentioned here. No one can be baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

The restoration of the kingdom was conditional on their acceptance of the Messiah. If the Jews had accepted the Messiah they would have gone into the kingdom. Since they did not, God had a plan B and sent Paul to the Gentiles.

7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

This goes with verse eight and is a prophecy that will be fulfilled in the tribulation and the millenium.

8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

This is still in effect today. A proper witness will be filled with the Holy Ghost and the word.

9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

This was a literal cloud and we are told that He will come again, twice, in clouds.

Once stopping above the earth,(the Rapture) and the other “coming in clouds “to the earth (the second advent). Just in case we have a new Christian here this morning,the second advent is a term we use to describe His coming back to earth to rule.

10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;

God,the angels and the redeemed are always portrayed as as wearing white garments. Do not make a common mistake and connect these two men with the two witnesses in Revelation. They may,or may not,be the same but the bible doesn't say that.

11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

When He returns it will be in the exact manner,and at the same place that He went up. Men will see Him do this,just as they saw Him leave.

12 Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey.

A sabbath days journey,that is, the distance one was allowed to walk on the sabbath,was about 3000 feet. So,comparing this to Luke 24:50 which says they went as far as to Bethany,means they stopped at the suburbs. Why is this important?Because nit pickers try to make this a contradiction. It's not since the suburbs could easily have extended out from the city itself.

13 And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James.

This upper room was in a private residence and was likely the residence of the apostles when they were in this area. A little thought shows that this was likely the home of a fairly wealthy person. It had to be large and houses for the poor were not large.

14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

This is the last time that Mary is mentioned. Be sure to notice that no one prayed to her. No one considered her a perpetual virgin. That would be hard to do considering the number of children she had(at least 7). She is due the same respect we would give to our own mothers,no more and no less.

15 And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,)

They were waiting for the Holy Spirit. One little nugget in there. One hundred twenty men was the number required ,by the Jews,to form a council. That can't be a coincidence.

16 Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus.

17 For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry.

Judas was never a real apostle but was numbered with them. The same was said of Jesus at the crucifixion where He was numbered with the transgressors though He was not one Himself.

18 Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.

People go to Matthew and try to make a contradiction where there isn't one. This verse says he fell and burst open. Matthew 27 5: and following says **And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself. {27:6} And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. {27:7} And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in.** Be sure to notice the time lapse here between the hanging and and the "bursting open". He hanged himself in the midst of the field his money had purchased ,but the field was purchased some time later by the priests. Judas had plenty of time to hang there, in the sun, to ripen in the heat. Matthew also tells us there was a great earthquake at that time. That was enough to shake Judas off that limb.

19 And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood. Let's read Psalm 69: 25-28 which goes with these two verses.

Let their habitation be desolate; [and] let none dwell in their tents.

{69:26} For they persecute [him] whom thou hast smitten; and they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded.

{69:27} Add iniquity unto their iniquity: and let them not come into thy righteousness.

{69:28} Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous.

Obviously this is speaking of Judas but also more than just him. I think it refers to all those who participated in the Lord's betrayal. They are blotted out of the book.

20 For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take.

The psalm referred to is 109:8. That says; Let his days be few; [and] let another take his office.

21 Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,

22 Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.

All of the apostles had been appointed, or chosen, by the Lord. I have some mixed feelings about this next choice of an apostle. He was chosen by lot so you might say that God influenced the choice. Consider the other possibility. Maybe God wanted them to wait for the one He appointed later. That would be Paul who was also chosen directly by the Lord.

23 And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.

24 And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen,

The disciples asked God, through prayer, to choose between Matthias and Barsabbas. Since God always knows what is best, we should pray about everything that we do.

25 That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.

According to the bible Judas was a devil and went to his own place, which is the bottomless pit. We see him rise out of that pit in the Book of the Revelation. See Matt 25:41 and John 6:70-71

26 And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

I believe this is an example of the permissive will of God and not His perfect will. That's just me. The bible doesn't tell us the will of God in this matter. This is the last time, in the New Testament that lots are cast for an answer. After this they have the Holy Spirit to guide them.

ACTS CHAPTER TWO

1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

As we start the second chapter notice what is here and what is missing. These Jews are waiting for the Father to send the Holy Spirit. We will see a gift of tongues here and a baptism of the holy Spirit. At this time there is no Christian present except the apostles, who have already received the Holy Spirit. Some of those present are people from other areas and some are law keeping, temple worshipping Jews. We are about to begin a transition from the law to the Church.

2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

This is the Holy Spirit, and in this case He comes with audible sound. There is a reason for this. It is so there can be no mistake that He has arrived. If He came quietly as He does to us many would have missed it.

3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

This was not fire. The verse says “like as of fire”. No one was burned.

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

In this case, this is not an unknown tongue. It clearly states that everyone heard them in their own language. Peter, and the other apostles, spoke in Hebrew and God did the miracle. There is no record of any of the converts speaking in “tongues”, as it is incorrectly done today. Keep in mind that the miracle here is in the hearing, not the speaking.

5 And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.

These were Jews from every nation, in the known world, and each heard the apostles in their own language. This was a supernatural sign and was for the Jews.

6 Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.

From the wording of this verse it seems to me that as people witnessed this miracle, they rushed out to tell others and more people gathered.

7 And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not

all these which speak Galilaeans?

The apostle Peter was addressing the house of Israel and the gospel of the grace of God is not mentioned.

8 And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?

Absolutely nothing unknown here. Everyone heard it in their native language.

9 Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia,

10 Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes,

11 Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.

This is just a list of some of the nationalities present but these people are Jews who had been dispersed throughout the world in the various captivities. Jewish men were required ,at least once in their lives,to attend Passover in Jerusalem. The gospel message is still being directed to the Jews at this point. Gentiles are not included until later. For now,Peter and the others are still preaching to the nation of Israel.

12 And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?

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

Notice that it says mocking. No one gets drunk on “new wine”,which is unfermented grape juice.

14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:

15 For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.

Don't ever say that God doesn't have a sense of humor. “We're not drunk yet since it is only nine o'clock”. Give us time.

16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;

In the next four verses Peter says he is quoting from the prophet Joel but this is not exactly what Joel says. Here is what Peter says and be sure to notice that none of these things happened at this time. The key is in verse 20 where we are told they will come to pass before the “day of the Lord”. The phrase,”day of the Lord” is always speaking of the second coming,so these things happen near the end of the tribulation period.

17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:

18 And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:

19 And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke:

20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and notable day of the Lord come:

21 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

I will say it again; the above five verses are tribulation material. Verse 21 is often used incorrectly today. Not everyone who calls on the Lord, in this dispensation, gets saved. Now it takes belief from the heart. This verse covers those miserable Jews who have managed to come through the tribulation and have come to a belief in their Messiah. They call on the Lord and He answers.

22 Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:

In verses 22 through 24 Peter begins to really condemn the Jews for killing their Messiah.

23 Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:

Of course God had foreknowledge that all of this was going to happen but that still does not remove individual responsibility for our actions. Even though God knows what we will do, before we do it, we still pay the price. A good example is the price the Jews pay for having said to Pilate, concerning Jesus; "let His blood be on us and on our our children". Remember that one? They are still paying the price and will continue to pay through the end of the tribulation.

24 Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.

This would have been serious stuff to those Jews so notice that Peter did not jump right into this condemnation from the beginning but waited until he had his audience warmed up. Had he condemned them too quickly he would have lost most of the audience.

25 For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face,

for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved:

26 Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope:

There are those that say the Jesus did not go to Hell when He died. This next verse must be a hard one for those people to swallow. In order not to be left in Hell, He had to first be in Hell.

27 Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

After His crucifixion The Lord Jesus Christ spent three days, and three nights, in the heart of the earth. While there He comforted the ones in Paradise, preached to the fallen angels in prison there (1 Pet 3:19) and left the sins of mankind in Hell. See also Eph. 4:8-10. So to sum that up, when Christ died His body went into the tomb, His Spirit returned to God the Father and His soul went into the center of the earth and through Hell and through Paradise where He brought out the OT saints. These dead people actually walked all through Jerusalem. That must have been something.

28 Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.

29 Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.

Peter wanted the people to understand that this prophecy is about Jesus. The prophecy cannot be about David, because David died and his grave was in a known place near Jerusalem.

30 Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;

“That fruit of his loins” refers to Mary, the mother of Jesus. She is descended from David. David ruled over all the people of God, so does Christ, and shall do for ever. Notice the present tense of the word does. While it is true that the Lord Jesus Christ does not rule over this present world, He does rule over “born again” Christians.

31 He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.

This refers back to, and reinforces, verse 27. He was not left in Hell and His body did not decay while it was in the tomb. Jesus is the only one who has ever come back from Hell. So, when the next book of that heresy comes out you can ignore it.

32 This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.

There are five of the apostles gathered here and all have seen the Lord alive after His crucifixion.

33 Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.

Do remember that the apostles had already received the indwelling Holy Spirit. Now watch this. The apostles, in verses 32 and 33, are putting themselves on the same level as the Holy Spirit as far as witnessing the risen Lord goes. Another way to look at this is that we now have the witness of these people, these apostles, as well as the witness of the Holy Spirit in this 1611 King James bible.

34 For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,

35 Until I make thy foes thy footstool.

These verses leave no doubt where Jesus is today. It's right there in 34. He is in heaven and at the right hand of the Father.

36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made the same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

His name and His titles are there in verse 36. Jesus, Lord and Christ.

37 Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

Now this large group realizes what they, as a nation, have done. They have now come to a hopeless situation.

38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

This verse sends thousands of people to Hell every day. If Acts and Hebrews are the most misused Books in the bible then surely this has to be one of the most misused verses in scripture. More heresies are built on Acts 2:38 than any other scripture. Look at what the Jews are told. First repent. That is, repent of having killed your Messiah. In this case it is repent of that specific sin and not repent of everything you have ever done. Then, be baptized. Remember that the Jews require a sign and, in this case, baptism is a sign. We have whole denominations now that say baptism saves you, or is necessary for salvation. It is not. Paul himself, when discussing baptism said, "I thank God I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius". Now, if anyone tries to say that water baptism saves, point out to them that not a one of the Apostles received the Holy Ghost by water baptism.

39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

The promise is that the Holy Ghost would be given if they repented and accepted Jesus as their Messiah.

40 And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

The last part of this verse is very interesting. I understand it as ,come out from the rest of the lost Jews and be separate. It is much the same as we are told today. Come out from the world and be separate.

41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Notice the term fellowship used here. Church membership is useless. All it means in our congregation is that a person can vote in business meetings and elections. The proper term is fellowship, which is real and a benefit.

43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

This is speaking of godly fear and reverence. These signs and wonders, were for the early church, that is, the Jews. These signs carried forward into Paul's early ministry but were done away with before the end of his ministry. Remember that Paul could not even heal his friend Trophimus, late in his ministry. This completed the change from sight to faith.

44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

This was the early church and is laughable if you consider the way this is sometimes used today. When this is put into practice it is never a two way street. It only flows to the cult leader.

45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.

There is not one cultist who practices Acts 2:38 who doesn't also practice this. In our system today this would be communism. In the early church it was necessary to help spread the gospel.

46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,

Notice these things about verse 46. They still went to the temple. This is fellowship

only,not the Lord's supper.

47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

Now the church is growing daily. There was enthusiasm and good preaching and teaching and plenty of fellowship. There is a strange statement in this last verse. "such as should be saved" as I see it can only refer back to 2:38. In other words,those who have followed the instructions given by the apostles.

ACTS CHAPTER THREE

1 Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour.

The apostles had a new faith, but they remained loyal Jews. So, they went to pray together in the Temple with other Jews. The Jews had three special times when they prayed;morning,noon and afternoon. There are still no regular meeting houses for the new Christians. Meetings were held in private houses. I would not be surprised to see it return to this before the Lord returns. I fully expect the fundamental churches to be sued out of existence if the Lord tarries much longer.

2 And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple;

There were no groups like the Salvation Army and Red Cross. Begging was the old SSI, and perhaps people might be more generous when they were going to worship God.

The Beautiful Gate was one of nine gates of the Temple. Josephus, describes a beautiful bronze gate, with double doors and over 75 feet tall. The beggar must have appeared a wretched mess in front of that gate.

3 Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms.

These two were as different as two people could be. Peter was strong and impetuous,he hacked off the high priests' servants ear with his sword. John was quiet,retiring tender and compassionate yet they are close enough to go up to pray together.

4 And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us.

5 And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them.

People normally turn away from those with afflictions and try not to make eye contact. That is a sad commentary on the human race in general. Since Peter looked directly at him, the man expected something.

6 Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.

It was customary to carry money, for offerings, when a person went to the Temple. The apostles were so poor that they had no money even for an offering.

7 And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.

Peter is showing his faith that the Lord would act on his command. He does this by extending his hand to help the beggar rise.

8 And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.

He is praising God verbally as well as with his somewhat wild jumping and running around.

9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God:

This is always the case with true healing. They were meant to be seen for a witness. I suspect too that praise would automatically follow a healing.

10 And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him.

Now they have gathered a crowd and the crowd wants an explanation. This kind of public miracle usually produced believers. I wonder how many of these we will see in Heaven one day? Probably not many but surely there will be some.

11 And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering.

Notice that the lame guy is still holding on to Peter and John. They now have a crowd gathered which is the point of the healing. Talk about a chance to witness.

12 And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?

Miracles are never done by man's power. The power always comes from God.

This was true then and is true now. It will not always be true because during the Tribulation the Antichrist will have limited power to do actual miracles.

13 The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go.

Pilate had a moral dilemma here. Part of him wanted to release Jesus and part wanted to crucify Him to appease the Jews. There is an interesting Jewish tradition and that is that Pilate later committed suicide.

14 But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you;

This is ironic coming from one who denied Christ three times. The murderer spoken of is Barabbas.

15 And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses.

Peter describes three different ways that Jesus has suffered at the hands of the people. Some of those who did these things are present in this very crowd. It's ironic that they had killed the very one who made life possible for them.

16 And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

It was only through the power of Christ that the lame man was made to walk. I like the fact that when there is a miraculous healing in scripture, it is always perfect and complete. This man did not even have a limp. Also, the healing was always instantaneous. There was no slow healing.

17 And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers.

Ignorance of the scriptures is no excuse today since we all have copies of God's instructions. These people had a tiny bit of excuse since they had to depend on others for their information. In this case it was the leaders who had failed.

18 But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.

All of the prophecies, by all of the prophets, beginning all the way back in Genesis 3:15, about the sufferings of Christ have now been fulfilled. Remember His words that one of the reasons He came was to fulfill the prophecies.

19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted

out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.

Again, this is repentance of having killed the Messiah. Peter and John are still preaching the gospel of the kingdom at this time. There is no gospel of the Grace of God preached yet. That comes with the apostle Paul. So, the Church has started, but with a different teaching. This is why we are cautioned to “rightly divide” the word of God. It will get you in a doctrinal mess if you do not. It is an easy thing by the way. You can get doctrine from anywhere in the bible BUT, you must check that against the gospel of John and the Pauline epistles to make sure they line up. Why? Because, according to the Holy Spirit, Paul is the apostle to the Gentiles and the gospel of the Grace of God was given through him. Is it important that we have the right gospel? You bet it is. Paul said in Galatians 1:8, **But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.** Stop and think about this. How many people, and denominations, today are preaching “another” gospel? Paul has just said that these who do are going to Hell.

20 And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:

This refers back to the last verse and “the times of refreshing”. Times of refreshing is also called restoration in other places. At the end of the tribulation both Israel, and the earth will be restored. Israel to belief in the Messiah and the earth to an Eden like state with Jesus as ruler.

21 Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

Jesus Christ must remain in heaven until the Second Advent. There you have the reason that He comes “in the air” for the Rapture. Times of restitution = Second Advent. BTW, the word Rapture is not in the bible. Neither is Trinity, nor millennium, nor second advent yet all these things are proper doctrine.

22 For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.

23 And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.

The apostle brings in Moses to strengthen his case. Most of what follows comes from Deut. 18:15 and is Moses warning that a greater prophet, Jesus, would come. It was the same then as it is now. Those who refuse to believe will be destroyed.

24 Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.

25 Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.

Most of the Jewish people had missed the prophecies about the Messiah. The ones who knew the prophecies, and should have taught the people, that is, the religious leaders, failed in their job. Some of that failure was deliberate in order to protect their positions.

26 Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

Here we have, in those last few words, the other reason that the Lord Jesus Christ came. That is, to save us from our sins.

ACTS CHAPTER FOUR

1 And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them,

Peter's teaching had attracted some unwelcome attention. The Sadducees were the religious con men of the day. They held their positions of power and wealth by leave of the Roman government and wanted nothing to cause a stir in a public place.

2 Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

This is ironic. The Sadducees objected to preaching the resurrection of the dead when they did not believe in resurrection. They also did not believe in angels or other spiritual beings. One has to wonder how they became the leaders of Israel.

3 And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next day: for it was now eventide.

The purpose of tossing the apostles in jail was to convene the Sanhedrin the next day. This council would have consisted of seventy members and would have included the high priest and members of his family plus various scribes and Pharisees.

4 Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.

This was five thousand men and no doubt there were almost as many women and

children present. If all of these five thousand were saved at once then this number is greater than the number saved at Pentecost.

5 And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers, and elders, and scribes,

6 And Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem.

Notice that Annas and Caiaphas are here. These are the two who sent Jesus to Pilate. We do not know who John and Alexander were except that they were part of the family of the high Priest.

7 And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?

8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel,

Watch this. You are indwelt with the Holy spirit when you are saved but you can be filled with the Holy Spirit as many times as needed. Be sure to notice the difference in Peter with the Holy Spirit guiding and strengthening him. Where formerly he was afraid of a servant girl and denied knowing Jesus, now he is not afraid to confess Him before the rulers.

9 If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole;

10 Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole.

Peter is stressing that it is by the power of Jesus Christ that the man was healed. They did not dispute the authority of the court, yet they stress that it was a good deed that they had done. Do notice that Peter stated again that this was the same Jesus that they had crucified and that God had raised Him from the dead.

11 This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.

Again we have a headstone which is also a cornerstone. You may remember from other lessons that there is only one building which uses that combination and that is a pyramid. The capstone of a pyramid is also a cornerstone.

12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

I think Peter is telling the Jewish leaders that they are going to Hell. They have not believed that Jesus Christ is the son of God and that belief in Him is the key to salvation.

Yet,as we see from the next verses they continued in unbelief and that is the only sin that sends a person to Hell. You name the sin,except for unbelief, and it can be forgiven.

13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

14 And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.

It is impossible to deny a miracle when it is standing right there before you. Peter was a fisherman. None of the apostles were learned men. The supernatural knowledge they had came from God the Holy Spirit. Contrast this to the members of the council who were all the highly educated men of the nation of Israel. This is the same situation we have today. Opposition to the gospel comes primarily from the secular colleges and universities. Changing the word of God comes primarily from the leadership of the so called Christian colleges and universities.

15 But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves,

16 Saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it.

17 But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name.

18 And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

19 But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.

In several places in scripture we are told to obey those in authority over us and to obey the laws of the land. That said,you are never to place man's laws ahead of God's law. Peter and John go right on preaching the word. This reminds us of Daniel and what he did when commanded not to pray. What did he do? He went to his apartment and opened the windows so all could hear and prayed to God. He did this knowing that he would be tossed to the lions.

20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

21 So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all men glorified God for that which was done.

This is the first recorded opposition to street preaching. There is a great deal of opposition to street preaching today but this is the way much of it was done by the apostles. There is nothing wrong with it today. Many people are saved by street preaching, and if nothing else is accomplished, it serves to call lost peoples attention to the things of God.

22 For the man was above forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was shewed.

23 And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.

Imagine the scene where you have a man miraculously healed, you have Peter and John preaching boldly and you have the people loudly praising God.

24 And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is:

This is a prayer of thanksgiving. God, as Creator is in complete control of the Sanhedrin and what it does. That same thing applies today. Our government, and others, is controlled by God for His purposes. He even uses the heathen for His purpose.

25 Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?

Now they quote from Psalm 2. The apostles are no longer concerned with the Sanhedrin nor, for that matter, with Satan's attempts to stop the spread of the gospel. I believe their boldness now comes from confidence that the Holy Spirit will protect them.

26 The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ.

Notice that two persons of the Trinity are mentioned in this verse.

27 For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,

The word child is changed to servant in the corrupt translations. This is an attack on the deity of the Christ child. There are four classes of people mentioned who are against The Lord Jesus Christ. They are heathen Gentiles, kings, rulers of Israel and the Jewish people. That pretty much covers everyone except the Church.

28 For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

This is speaking of God's knowledge before the foundation of the world. He determined to send His Son to save sinners and He determined that Jesus would die to accomplish

that end. He also determined that sinners would have free will to reject the Lord Jesus and thus doom themselves to Hell. That too was part of what was determined before.

29 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word,

Notice here that the threatening of the council is really against God and not against the apostles. The apostles are not praying for safety, but for boldness to preach.

30 By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.

31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

The evidence of the filling of the Holy Spirit is to speak the word of God with boldness. Check on yourself. Look around you and see who is not ashamed of the gospel of Christ and who boldly puts His word out there. By the way, age, and education, have nothing to do with this boldness. No one here spoke in tongues.

32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

This was a voluntary form of communism, very different from modern communism which is forced. In this voluntary communism things were shared as needed. In modern communism things flow one way, from the people to the leaders.

33 And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.

Since the Holy Spirit came, at Pentecost, there seems to be a great unity among the believers who, by this time, have increased in number to more than ten thousand. These people are praying for the apostles and for each other.

34 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,

35 And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

Generosity in this group of believers has reached the point where they are selling their houses and land to donate to the church and to each other. This is against human nature so is clear evidence of action by the Holy Spirit in their lives.

36 And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus,

Barnabas was a Levite but ,in the church,the Levitical priesthood had ceased to exist. Now,according to 1 Peter 1-8 every believer is a priest with the Lord Jesus Christ as High Priest.

37 Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Why Barnabas is mentioned by name I do not know. It could be that He was the first to donate or it could be that he was the wealthiest among them. Whatever the reason,he was greatly used by God as an aid to the apostle Paul. So,Barnabas has the honor of helping to spread the gospel of the grace of God for the New Testament church..

ACTS CHAPTER FIVE

1 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession,

2 And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Contrast this with Barnabas in the last chapter. Ananias and Sapphira were showing that all too human trait,greed. They really did not want to give up what they had but wanted to “look good” to other members of the congregation.

3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?

4 Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

It was not wrong to keep the possession, but was very wrong to lie to the congregation and to the Holy Spirit. There are also the sins of insincerity and hypocrisy here. You can clearly see Satan's hand in this.

5 And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things.

Ananias and Sapphira died as an object lesson to the congregation and to us. Here's a question for you. Were these two saved? The scripture doesn't say but there is a good chance that they were. It would have been hard to be a part of this early group and stay lost.

6 And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him.

No funeral and no nice words spoken about the deceased. No one even bothered to

notify his wife. They simply wound him in linen cloth, dropped him in the hole and covered him up. All sorts of reasons were given, by the commentators, for the young men being used. Some said they were servants, some said soldiers. None of that rings true with me. We still call on the young men to do the heavy lifting.

7 And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in.

Here comes the little wife and she doesn't have a clue.

8 And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much.

Be sure to notice that Sapphira told the truth. Let's put some figures on this for clarity. They get ten thousand for the property. They agree to say they received five thousand and keep back five thousand. Peter asks Sapphira, did you receive five thousand. She truthfully answers yes since they did receive five plus five. Sapphira's problem is that though it was the truth it was not the whole truth but a deliberate attempt to deceive. In other words, the truth was a lie.

9 Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out.

This proves that Peter had the gifts of knowledge and discernment of spirits. He could see things, in people's behavior, others could not. I believe these gifts along with one called "helps" are still in the Body of Christ today. This type of gift is not seen so does not interfere with our faith.

10 Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband.

Funerals were cheaper in those days.

11 And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.

This was the purpose for killing Ananias and Sapphira, to be a lesson to the church. This is a prime example of what Paul says later in Galatians 6:7 **"God is not mocked"**. There are people today who fear joining a real church because they fear they will be punished for their sins. These are people who need an explanation of how things work in the church.

12 And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch.

Keep in mind that we are still dealing with Jews. The signs and wonders are for them. The word had gone out for miles around. The power of the apostles, through the Holy Spirit, was so great that even Peter's shadow touching someone healed that person.

13 And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them.

This does not mean that no one else joined but rather that those who were less than sincere did not join the congregation. We know this from what comes in the next few verses.

14 And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.)

We know by numbers mentioned that there are now more, probably many more, than 10,000 people in the early church. Now "multitudes", too many to count, are added.

15 Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.

16 There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.

Word of the wonders, including healing, has spread far and wide. Now large crowds are beginning to gather.

17 Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation,

A sect, we might call it a cult, is a group of people who blindly follow their human leaders instead of the word of God. Think about that for a while and keep in mind that it has nothing to do with size. It can be some small, neighborhood group following some self-proclaimed prophet, or a group of many millions doing the same.

18 And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison.

19 But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said,

Their sentence is commuted by an angel. The purpose was to encourage the apostles in their work and, to give the people a new and impressive proof of the truth of their message. That they were imprisoned would be known to the people. That they were made as secure as possible was also known.

20 Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.

In other words, go and stand in the most public place available and preach the gospel. This is proof of their boldness, and proof that God had delivered them. This also clearly shows we are to obey God rather than man when man's laws are against those of God.

21 And when they heard that, they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught. But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.

God brought the apostles out of the prison at night. God not only brought them out but locked the door back behind them. Imaging this bunch of Jewish bigwigs gathering and thinking they are in charge.

22 But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison, they returned and told,

The miraculous thing about this prison break is that no one even knows they are gone until the council calls for them the next day. The doors are still locked and the guards are still at their posts.

23 Saying, The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors: but when we had opened, we found no man within.

24 Now when the high priest and the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow.

Obviously someone let the apostles out but the council knew this story was going to grow into something big.

25 Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people.

I love this verse. They are in the most public place in town teaching the people just as they were doing the day before.

26 Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned.

These soldiers were temple guards and not Roman soldiers. Roman soldiers would not have feared the people.

27 And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them,

So now the ruling body of Israel has commanded the apostles not to preach Jesus. They preach Him anyway.

28 Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name?

and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.

The irony here is that the blood of Jesus was already on them and on their children. Remember the statement to Pilate, "let His blood be upon us and our children"? The Jews have now been paying for over 2000 years for that rash statement. Six million Jews in the Nazi gas chambers is just one of the ways they have paid.

29 Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

It's already been said but bears repeating. God's law trumps man's law. Consider abortion as an example. Abortion is legal according to man's law. That doesn't excuse it in the sight of God.

30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.

Peter and the others give the leaders a sermon and remind them again that they have killed the Messiah. The apostles aren't holding back. They really lay it on the council.

31 Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.

Prince with a capital P is speaking of the Lord Jesus but is a strange title considering that He is King of Kings. He is spoken of as the Prince of Peace and in Daniel 9 as Messiah the Prince.

32 And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.

There are several of the apostles witnessing these statements about Jesus and if that isn't enough, the Holy Spirit is also witness to the truth of these statements. It's odd that the Holy Spirit is said to be a witness to these men of the council, many of whom did not even believe in the Holy Spirit. I think this was put in place for us 2000+ years later.

33 When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them.

Hypocrites. It is against Jewish law for the council to kill anyone. Keep in mind that they had to have the Romans do the dirty work where Jesus was concerned.

34 Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space;

This is the same Gamaliel who was Paul's teacher. A smart man judging by what he says in the next few verses. Smart but lost. God will use lost people when it suits His purpose.

35 And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men.

36 For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought.

37 After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed.

We do not know who Theudas and this Judas were other than they were rebels who rose up against the government. Gamaliel's point was that since God wasn't in it it came to nothing and all the people involved were either dead or dispersed..

38 And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought:

39 But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.

40 And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

More lying from the council. Gamaliel said, "leave them alone", and they agreed, then turned right around and beat them.

41 And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.

This has to be a hard thing to do but is an excellent object lesson on giving God praise whatever the circumstance. Their bodies hurt, but in their spirits were joyful. They knew that God was blessing them and they would have a great reward in heaven.

42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

Rather than being discouraged by the pain and humiliation, the apostles rejoice that they have been counted worthy to suffer for the Lord. They go right on preaching the gospel.

ACTS CHAPTER SIX

1 And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a

murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.

The number of converts had steadily increased and now numbered more than ten thousand, probably at least double that number. The Christian church is now well on its way. With larger numbers come problems and the problem here is one of discrimination. The Gentile widows are not being cared for.

2 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.

Reread this verse, particularly the last part. There you have, in a nutshell, the duties of the pastorate. It is to study, to spend much time in prayer, and to preach/teach. In other words, their life should be devoted to the word of God. They are the spiritual leaders of the Church. See also verse four. We will get to that in a minute.

3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

Here come the deacons. They are made fun of, talked about, even ridiculed by calling the song, "I shall Not Be Moved", the deacons song. Yet, in any sizable church, decently run, these men are the backbone of the church. This is a ministry instituted by God. From 1 Tim. 3:8-13 we have the qualifications of the deacons. **Likewise [must] the deacons [be] grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; {3:9} Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. {3:10} And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being [found] blameless. {3:11} Even so [must their] wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. {3:12} Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. {3:13} For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.** So, to cut to the bottom line, deacons serve the people as spiritual ministers, that is, servants. The pastor labors in the word and the deacons assist the pastor to fulfill his call. One last thing before we leave the deacons. They are picked by the congregation, that is, in the scriptures deacons are elected, then ordained. Elders are appointed, then ordained.

4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

Here you have it again, the pastor's job. What do we say when the Holy Spirit puts something in more than once? He means for you to get it.

5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch:

This is the first mention of Antioch, where they were first called Christians. This is also

the place the manuscripts for our King James 1611 bible came from. Antioch had some other firsts as well. They were the first to send out missionaries (Acts 13: 2-4). They had the first Bible teachers (Acts 11:26).

6 Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.

Of course seven are chosen, seven being God's perfect number. Also notice that all the names listed here are Greek and the problem was for Gentile widows. This can't be a coincidence. The church chose people who would be concerned. One last word concerning the deacons, and this is a quote from the Barnes NT commentary." *When the numbers had grown it was necessary that this matter should be entrusted to the hands of laymen, and that the ministry should be freed from all embarrassment, and all suspicions of dishonesty and unfairness in regard to pecuniary matters. It has never been found to be wise that the temporal affairs of the church should be entrusted in any considerable degree to the clergy; and they should be freed from such sources of difficulty and embarrassment*".

7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

Be sure to notice here that not only are the common people being saved but many of the Levitical priesthood as well. Many were getting saved because the men of God were free to do their job while the needs of the church were being taken care of by the deacons.

8 And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.

Back in verse five it is said that Stephen is full of the Holy Ghost and here it is said that he is full of faith and power. It's the same thing as the power comes from the Holy Spirit.

9 Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen.

We know from this verse that there were now several groups, some still meeting in synagogues and probably clinging to some parts of the Jewish law.

10 And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.

We do not know what the argument was about but the troublemakers could not resist Stephen's wisdom and knowledge.

11 Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God.

Now they use the same tactics the Pharisees used against Jesus. False testimony that we would call perjury.

12 And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council,

13 And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law:

Stephen's supposed crime was double blasphemy. He is accused of speaking against the Law and the Temple which, in effect, is speaking against God.

14 For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us.

The change in the law that Stephen preached was a change in the ceremonial law and not a change in the moral law which has always been, and still is, in effect. In other words it is still morally wrong to steal, kill, commit adultery etc.

15 And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

Many believe that Stephen's face glowed with divine glory just as Moses did when he had been in the presence of God.

ACTS CHAPTER SEVEN

1 Then said the high priest, Are these things so?

In response to the High Priest, Stephen launches into a long sermon about the God of the Old Testament and how He was a moving, living God and not confined to any one period of history. As such, nothing Stephen has taught is out of line with the Old Testament teachings.

2 And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran,

3 And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee.

Stephen focuses first on Abraham. Because he followed God's direction he was later rewarded with a son and more descendants than the stars in the sky. It could not have been easy to leave a comfortable home in Mesopotamia and go into what was basically a desert, not knowing where he would end up.

4 Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell.

5 And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child.

Abraham had riches in cattle and precious metals but God never did give him land. That was reserved for his descendants when they came out of Egypt. The only land that Abraham owned were two small spots to use for burying his people.

6 And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat them evil four hundred years.

God's promises became true. Abraham did have children and their descendants were slaves in Egypt. They did leave Egypt and they did make it to the Promised Land.

7 And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God: and after that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place.

This is one of those verses with a double meaning. It speaks of the plagues on Egypt until they let the Hebrews go. Then, like other nations which have been against Israel, God has not blessed them since that time. There are other good examples like Spain and Britain. Both of these nations turned against Israel and both are now a joke as the nations go. Once, the sun never set on the British empire. It does now. God said, way back in Genesis, **"I will bless them who bless thee and curse him who curseth thee"**. He has always done exactly what He promised.

8 And he gave him the covenant of circumcision: and so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs.

The name Jacob means deceiver and the name certainly fit in this case. Jacob was a sorry character during most of his life. Nevertheless, God used him in a mighty way. His name was later changed to Israel.

9 And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him,

You all remember the story of Joseph, how he was sold into Egyptian slavery by his brothers. God planned this from the beginning. By sending Joseph into

slavery He is preparing a place for the Jewish nation to grow and for the promised land to be prepared for their return.

10 And delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house.

It's easy to see God's hand in this. There is no way that a Hebrew slave can become governor of all Egypt but here he is in charge of everything there..

11 Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Chanaan, and great affliction: and our fathers found no sustenance.

The famine was in all the lands including Egypt but Egypt had plenty of food due to the advance planning of Joseph.

12 But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first.

13 And at the second time Joseph was made known to his brethren; and Joseph's kindred was made known unto Pharaoh.

14 Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls.

During their four hundred plus years in Egypt these few people had grown into a great multitude numbering more than a million people. The number that came out of Egypt may have been as few as one and a half million or as many as five million depending on which commentator you believe. At any rate it was a huge number of people.

15 So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers,

16 And were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor the father of Sychem.

Stephen is still preaching here and reminding the council of their history.

17 But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt,

The Israelites had grown to such a number that the Egyptian leadership felt threatened.

18 Till another king arose, which knew not Joseph.

19 The same dealt subtilly with our kindred, and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live.

Apparently the story of a deliverer was better known among the Egyptians than among the Israelites. See verse 25. This murder of the Hebrew male children was meant to destroy the deliverer. Now Stephen is about to tie the two deliverers, Moses and the Lord Jesus Christ, together as he switches to the story of Moses.

20 In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months:

The Egyptians were murdering all the male children under two years. This was the same thing Herod tried to do in the case of Jesus and for the same reason, to stop the Deliverer. This is all Satan from start to finish. Now this next is free. Pharaoh killed children and a deliverer showed up. Herod killed children and the Deliverer showed up. America is killing children and...you figure it out.

21 And when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son.

This makes Moses Pharaoh's adopted grandson but in no case would he have been put ahead of a natural son, or grandson as was pictured in "The Ten Commandments."

22 And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.

We often miss the irony of this story. God used Moses, a man trained by the best teachers Egypt had to offer, to free the Hebrew people from those same Egyptians. Another irony is that Moses, with all his great education, spent 40 years, in the desert, as a shepherd of sheep and goats and another 40 years as a shepherd of people. So why did Moses need all that education? He needed it so that he could write the first five books of the Bible. God knows what He is doing.

23 And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel.

He was forty when he left Egypt, spent forty in the desert and forty more leading the Israelites around in circles in the wilderness. So Moses was one hundred twenty years old when he died just outside the promised land. The Bible tells us that his strength and vigor had not decreased as he aged. God gave him the strength to do the job.

24 And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian:

Here Moses committed a murder. Here it says he smote him but back in the

book of Exodus we are told that he killed and buried him. There are several other instances in scripture where God used murderers for His purposes. David and Paul come to mind.

25 For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not.

The Egyptians, especially the educated ones knew the story of the deliverer. No doubt there were Hebrews who knew as well.

26 And the next day he shewed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another?

The words of Moses might well be applied to the whole human race. We have fighting, lawsuits, wars continually and it seems the poorer the individuals the more strife there is in their lives.

27 But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?

28 Wilt thou kill me, as thou diddest the Egyptian yesterday?

Moses thought no one knew of the killing but obviously the story had already made the rounds.

29 Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Midian, where he begat two sons.

Notice that this is not like the account in the movie The Ten Commandments. As soon as he knew that it was known, he took off for the hills. He went to Midian which is in Saudi Arabia.

30 And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sina an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush.

At this point Moses had been in Egypt for forty years and in the desert for forty more. He is eighty years old when God calls him. By the way, scripture does not say that Moses was eighty. We arrive at that by adding other events together and by the fact that the scripture does say that the old Pharaoh had died and history has that event recorded..

31 When Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight: and as he drew near to behold it, the voice of the Lord came unto him,

This burning bush is on Mt. Sinai which is where God gave the ten commandments later. One more comment on this; in Ex 3:1, it is said that this occurred at Mount Horeb. There is no contradiction; Horeb and Sinai are

different peaks or elevations of the same mountain.

32 Saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold.

Who is this in the bush? It is called an angel of the Lord, small A, but it is also the Word of God, so I believe it is the same one who walked with Adam and Eve in the garden. In other words it is the Lord Jesus Christ doing the speaking from the burning bush. He is about to take charge, and direction, of the Jewish people.

33 Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is holy ground.

Notice that this is Gentile land and is called holy ground. Holy places are holy because God is there. They are not holy because of the country that they are in. If you could find this exact spot today it would no longer be holy ground.

34 I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt.

God spoke to Abraham and Joseph when they were far from their own country. Moses was far from the country that God had promised to the Israelites. God showed that he had not forgotten his covenant with Abraham. He was still 'the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob' (and He still is). If someone tells you that the Church has replaced Israel they are speaking heresy. Though currently spiritually blind, the Israelites are still God's people.

35 This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush.

Moses, as a deliverer, or a redeemer, is a type of Christ, in whom we have redemption through his blood, Eph 1:7; as Moses by the blood of the lamb, on the doorposts brought forth and saved the people of Israel.

36 He brought them out, after that he had shewed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the wilderness forty years.

Again, Stephen emphasised that the Jews had rejected Moses as their ruler at first. God showed the people that he had chosen Moses and the proof was that Moses did miracles both in Egypt and again at the Red Sea. He did them again in the desert proving that God was with him wherever he went.

37 This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet

shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear.

Now Stephen is speaking of Moses prophecy of another, and better, redeemer. As those people had rejected Moses, so Jesus' own people rejected Jesus.

38 This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:

This is often misused. The church mentioned here is not the New Testament Church. The word means a "called out assembly", so this was a group of saved, and unsaved, Jews.

39 To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt,

The Israelites would not obey Moses but in the next verse they turn to an idol.

40 Saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for as for this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

While God was giving the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai the Israelites were making an idol. They worshipped something made with hands. Don't you know that God knew exactly what they were doing while He was giving the Law?

41 And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands.

In hindsight we know that, at least in this case, Aaron lied and denied making the golden calf. The story is in Ex.32 which says; **Whosoever hath any gold, let them break [it] off. So they gave [it] me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf.** Now, as ridiculous as this sounds, there is a good possibility that it is true. After all, Satan had a big hand in this and he is capable of making a calf.

42 Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness?

43 Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.

'The book that Stephen refers to is the book of Amos, specifically ch 5:25-27 These verses show how the Israelites worshipped not only the golden calf but

many other false gods from time to time. God allowed them to do what they wanted. He always allows us to choose what we do. The Holy Spirit guides us, but we are free to choose.

44 Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen.

God had Moses construct a portable tabernacle to drag around the wilderness so the priests would have a place to minister and the people a place to worship and offer sacrifices. Later David wished to construct a permanent Temple but God did not allow it because David was a man of "blood", in other words a warrior. Instead He allowed David's son Solomon to build the Temple.

45 Which also our fathers that came after brought in with Jesus into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drove out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David;

Jesus here is correct of course. It is speaking of Joshua and reveals that the Book of Joshua is a type of the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ.

46 Who found favour before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob.

47 But Solomon built him an house.

Solomon realized that God could not be contained in any building, no matter how beautiful. God, a spirit, can not be confined to a physical space.

48 Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet,

The Law and the Temple were the center of Jewish life. Stephen showed that although the Law and the Temple were important, God was more important. In other words, their idea about God was too small! I believe we are just as bad in this respect.

49 Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest?

50 Hath not my hand made all these things?

He, the Lord, pointed out that He made heaven and earth and really had no need of a man-made temple. Stephen points out that the nation has always failed God under their leadership. Now Stephen turns on them specifically.

51 Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.

At this point,if the Sanhedrin had repented and followed the Messiah,the Jewish people would have followed their leadership and the nation would have turned to Jesus. Instead,Jesus decides to scrape the bottom of the barrel and gets us,the Gentiles.

52 Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers:

Those in the Sanhedrin were exactly like their ancestors. Their forefathers had rejected the prophets and now the Jewish leaders here have rejected the Messiah,and even worse than that, they had killed him.

53 Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.

This is really laying it on them. He tells them they have rejected everything God has ever told them.

54 When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.

Stephen's whole sermon had been negative. Now the leaders are so mad they are ready to kill him. They are so mad they have attacked his person to the point of biting him.

55 But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,

Most of us have heard that Jesus stood up to honor His martyr Stephen. This may be true and it is certainly a beautiful story. The commentators who dig deeper say that Jesus was standing ,getting ready to return for the Second Advent had the Jews accepted Stephen's message. When they rejected it, He sat back down. I do not agree with this view since Jesus knows the end from the beginning and therefore knew that the Jews would not accept Him. Because He knew this it makes more sense that He stood to welcome Stephen. The signs, and wonders, now ceased in Jerusalem. This also marks the beginning of the transition from Jerusalem to Antioch.

56 And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

This is that point in time when the final rejection of the Messiah,by the Jews,took place. Be sure to notice that this is Stephen who is seeing the Lord Jesus Christ,and he is seeing Him before he dies.

57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran

upon him with one accord,

Stephen is seeing Jesus and the mob is seeing nothing. They go wild with rage.

58 And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.

In case we have new people this morning, this is Saul whose name was later changed to Paul. That is Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles. Don't miss the fact that Saint Paul was participating in a murder here.

59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

The name Stephen means crown and he certainly earned a crown of life. Stephen is the first of a long list of martyrs in Church history.

60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

The Sanhedrin are supposed to be a sober group of judges. In this case they are no better than a lynch mob. They have no authority to kill Stephen but drag him outside the city and stone him to death anyway.

ACTS CHAPTER EIGHT

1 And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.

Saul approved of Stephen's murder. That same day, the Christians in Jerusalem began to suffer extra persecution because of Saul and as a result most of the believers left the city, except the apostles. We have already discussed the fact that the apostles resisted the command to take the gospel to all the world.

2 And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.

I believe the term "devout men" indicates that these were believers, probably even part of the disciples who had followed Jesus.

3 As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.

The murder of Stephen started a persecution of Christians like they had not seen before. By the way, this persecution was the direct will of God since it caused the Jews to leave

Jerusalem and take the gospel with them to other parts of the world.

4 Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.

Three important things happened because of Stephen's death.

Immediately, Saul began to persecute the Christians in Jerusalem. By his own testimony later he was very cruel, searching even people's houses to find the believers.

Many believers left Jerusalem travelling all across Judea and Samaria and by this the gospel was spread far and wide.

People outside Jerusalem heard the good news about Jesus. The believers who had left Jerusalem did not hide but were bold as they preached the gospel in these new places.

5 Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.

Now we switch from Stephen to Phillip. Phillip was one of those deacons ordained in chapter five. He is now the first recorded evangelist. Phillip and the others are now taking the gospel outside the Jewish circle. Remember that the Samaritans are half Gentile and so, were hated by the Jews.

6 And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.

Remember that the apostles had laid hands on Phillip so he had the signs and wonders of the apostles. He had no New Testament so relied on leadership of the Holy Spirit and the signs and wonders to get converts.

7 For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed.

Phillip was not performing "exorcisms" here but was simply preaching Jesus. Demonic spirits will not stay around when the blood of Jesus is being preached. This seems as good a time as any to mention that we have a great deal of demonic activity in America today. Don't think that hollywoods' portrayal of demons is accurate. It stands to reason that with all the demonic activity in hollywood they would be giving us a very false picture of demon possession. I believe, and this is just me, that demon spirits are everywhere around us. In addition to personal demons, and there are plenty of those, there are theological demons. These teach false doctrine. 1 Tim.4:1-4 says this; **Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; {4:2} Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; {4:3} Forbidding to marry, [and commanding] to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.** What this means is that there

are whole, large denominations controlled by demonic spirits.

8 And there was great joy in that city.

The joy was because people had been healed of sickness and disease and the demons had been driven away by Phillip's preaching. People had become believers and had begun to have some of the fruits of the Spirit. Joy is one of those fruits.

9 But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one:

Phillip's work is overshadowing Simon and causing him to lose customers. It may well be that some of the people of the city regarded Simon as a god. Imagine one of our great illusionists out in the jungle somewhere they did not see many outsiders. It would not be hard for native people to believe David Copperfield was a god. This is exactly the situation Simon was in in Samaria.

10 To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God.

Simon's ability to influence the people came to an end when they saw genuine miracles performed by God, through Phillip.

11 And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries.

Simon's whole desire seemed to be near Phillip and the other Christians in order to find out how they had this power to perform miracles. He seemed to believe that Phillip, Peter and John were doing these miracles by their own power. He seemed less concerned about his soul than about how to have this power.

12 But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

Don't miss the fact that these people of Samaria believed and were baptized but did not receive the Holy Spirit at this time. This is odd but there is a reason for it. We will see the reason in a few more verses.

13 Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.

There is always a debate among Bible students as to whether Simon was lost or saved. Keep in mind that their salvation was a little bit different from ours. For us it is truly believe and publicly confess that Jesus is the Son of God. Remember from Acts 2:38 that theirs was believe, repent and be baptized. Simon, as well as the other people there, found it easy to believe considering all the signs and wonders done by Phillip.

14 Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John:

To be blunt about this, the Jews, since they hated the Samaritans, would not want to believe that the Samaritans were saved. The Samaritans were half breed Jew/Gentile and there was hatred from each group toward the other. Peter and John went to Samaria to make sure the tales they were hearing were true.

15 Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost:

This is proof to Peter and John that the people of Samaria are saved. They will take this proof back to Jerusalem.

16 (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)

There are some interesting things about this baptism of the Spirit. The first instance of the Holy Spirit coming on a group of people was in the upper room on the one hundred twenty. These were all Jews. The second instance was the household of Cornelius, a Gentile. We will cover this one in chapter ten. The third group was the disciples of John the Baptist in chapter nineteen. There is no instance of the Holy Spirit ever coming on someone for the second time. Let me repeat; there is never a second baptism of the Holy Spirit anywhere in scripture.

17 Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

Again we have a difference in the receiving of the Holy Spirit. We receive it instantly when we are saved. They had to wait for the laying on of hands by the apostles.

18 And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money,

19 Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.

This is an attempt to bribe the apostles. The word simony, which is the purchase of church offices for money, comes from Simon. This practice goes on in some denominations today.

20 But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.

21 Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.

Here Peter seems to be saying that Simon didn't get it. In other words, his so called conversion was for the wrong reasons.

22 Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.

23 For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.

Peter went straight to the root of the matter. He saw that Simon's heart was still caught up in superstition and magic.

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

Simon is terrified at what Peter has told him but even then he will not even pray for himself but asks for others to do it for him.

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

26 And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.

With all the success going on in Samaria it seems strange that Phillip would be told to go into the desert but that is just what he was told to do and he did not seem to hesitate. He is to leave the crowds coming to Jesus and go into the wilderness.

27 And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship,

This man was an important official in charge of the queen's treasury. He had traveled a great distance to worship in Jerusalem but the fact that he was a eunuch may have caused him to be turned away from the ceremonies in the temple since it was against Hebrew law for him to participate. Deut.23:1 is the reference for why he may not have been allowed to participate. You can look that one up. I'm not going there.

28 Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet.

The place he was reading was Isaiah 53 which is prophecy concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. It is likely that he had heard about Jesus and his death on the cross while he was at Jerusalem.

29 Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.

This chapter,eight,reveals the conversion of a black African. The next chapter ,nine,shows the conversion of an Asian and chapter ten has the conversion of a white man.

30 And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?

Obviously he was reading it aloud.

31 And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.

This eunuch could not have expected to be enlightened in this manner, but God, who intended to teach him and to save him, sent the living teacher, and opened to him the sacred Scriptures, and led him to the Savior.

32 The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth:

Phillip was completely led by the Holy Spirit in his dealings with the Ethiopian. Christians should always listen to the Holy Spirit and be guided by Him, especially when we are witnessing to someone.. The Holy Spirit will tell us where to go, what to do, and what to say, but we must be willing to listen.

33 In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.

34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?

God sent a messenger to guide him. He often prepares a person, by events in his, or her, life to be receptive to a salvation message. This can be something like job loss, sickness or a death in the family. When he does this He will send a messenger to witness about Jesus.

35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

Phillip did not stay in Isaiah but went straight to a gospel message. He showed that Jesus had recently fulfilled these prophecies by His death, burial, resurrection and ascension into Heaven.

36 And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?

The eunuch asked the question because he knew of John's baptism. Gentile baptism pictures the death, burial and resurrection of the lord Jesus Christ and is not necessary for salvation.

37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

This verse has the secret of salvation. It is a very important salvation verse and has been

taken out of the new corrupt bibles.

38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

They went down into the water and they came up out of the water. This is baptism by total immersion and not by some sprinkling, or pouring water over the head of someone. It should also be noted that baptism is always after salvation, never before.

39 And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.

As soon as they came out of the water, Phillip disappeared and the eunuch never saw him again. It appears that a Christian church sprang up, about this time, in Ethiopia so it is assumed by many, that this was started by the eunuch who now had a better understanding of the gospel.

40 But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.

So the Holy Spirit beamed Phillip to Azotus (OT city of Ashdod), many miles away from where he had been with the eunuch. From there he went preaching all the way up to Caesarea where he settled down. See Acts 21:8 where we find Phillip with a family. **And the next [day] we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was [one] of the seven; and abode with him. {21:9} And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.**

ACTS CHAPTER NINE

1 And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,

Saul has just recently been helping in the murder of Stephen. It is never clearly said that he killed other Christians but it is strongly suggested by other scriptures.

2 And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

The fact that he asked for the job shows just how much Paul hated Christians and desired to persecute them. It is likely that many of the Christians in

Damascus were part of those saved at Pentecost who then had to leave the city.

3 And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:

Everyones salvation experience is different. I am sure none of us had one like this. Be sure not to fall into that trap of believing that because someone elses experience is not like yours that they must not be saved.

4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

Jesus does not accuse Paul of persecuting the church but rather it is Jesus himself who is persecuted. Paul later comes to understand the close relationship between Jesus and His Church and puts that into his letters to the churches.

5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

This is where the conversion of Paul takes place. Be sure to notice that Paul addresses Jesus as Lord.

6 And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

The words "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do" indicate a subdued soul and a humbled spirit. Where before he wanted only to do his own will, now he inquired what was the will of the Savior. This indicates the proper change in the sinner. While the sinner follows his own will, the first act of the Christian is to surrender his own will to that of God, and to resolve to do that which he requires.

7 And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.

Paul's traveling companions heard a voice but apparently did not recognize that it came from God. To them it may have just sounded like a foreign language. In other words, they could tell it was a mans voice but the words did not make sense to them. When people are discussing Paul's experience here they usually will say the men heard a loud noise but that is not what the verse says. It clearly says they heard a voice.

8 And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus.

He saw no man but he had seen the Lord Jesus. Now Saul needed help. He was blind. His companions led him into Damascus. He could not see for three

days.

9 And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.

He did not eat and he did not drink. There is no indication that Saul knew when this would end or if he would ever regain his sight. He may well have believed that this was to be his permanent punishment for persecuting Christ.

10 And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord.

Paul is being called into a new ministry but first a disciple named Ananias is called to minister to Paul. Ananias had full knowledge of Paul's persecution of the Jewish believers so it was not a small thing to approach Paul and treat him as a believing brother.

11 And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth,

Straight Street was very long and goes across Damascus from the east to the west. It is said that this same street is still in Damascus today.

12 And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.

A vision is different from a dream in that a vision is experienced while a person is awake. We also know from this verse that Paul now knows that he will regain his sight. Also notice that God works on both people at once. He works on both Ananias and Paul. This is exactly the way successful witnessing works. God has to work on both at once.

13 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem:

Ananias is afraid and questioning God. No doubt that all the Christians in the neighborhood had heard of Saul and the way he had persecuted Christians at Jerusalem.

14 And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.

In spite of being afraid, Ananias does what God tells him to do. There is a big lesson here for modern Christians. No matter how afraid to witness you may be, do it anyway. One thing to keep in mind is the fact (v 12) that God works on both parties. As soon as it becomes apparent to you that God isn't working on

the other party,move on to someone else who may be more receptive to the gospel..

15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

Paul had a threefold call. His call was to the Gentiles,to kings and to the children of Israel. He had a great burden for the Jews but God's call must always come first. Paul is now officially named by God,as the apostle to the Gentiles.

16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

Paul did suffer much while he was a missionary. Paul was beaten eight times. He was stoned and left for dead. He was in prison several times and tradition says he was beheaded ,in Rome,by order of Caesar.

17 And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

Be sure to notice that Ananias greets Saul as “brother Saul”,indicating that Paul is saved which he is. He was saved on the Damascus road. This is important and we will see why in the next verse.

18 And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.

Here it is. Paul was baptized three days after he was saved. This tells us that baptism has nothing to do with the new birth. Paul tells us that his new birth occurred when he saw Christ,three days before he was baptized. There are all sorts of heretics running around saying that water baptism saves. This tells us plainly that it does not.

19 And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.

It is at about this point that Paul went to desert and Mt.Sinai ,for forty days, to receive the truth directly from the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Romans 16:25-26 has this to say and be sure to notice that this is a new gospel message which Paul refers to as “my gospel”; **Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, {16:26} But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience**

of faith: So now, God has revealed a mystery and given Paul a new gospel to carry to the nations.

20 And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

From the start Paul is a powerful witness. He still has a burden for the Jews and preaches in the synagogues at every opportunity. The persecutor has become the most powerful proclaimer of the gospel.

21 But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?

See how the new birth had changed Saul! Now he was telling the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah. It is natural that people were confused, but Saul had met Jesus himself so now he was certain that Jesus was the Messiah. Saul's conversion was different from ours in that his was by sight while ours is by faith..

22 But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.

Saul was a Pharisee so he had a good education. While at school with Gamaliel, he had learned to speak well in public and now he had the Holy Spirit to help him. His words 'grew more powerful all the time. He gave evidence, from Old Testament prophecies, that Jesus was the Messiah, and the Jews who opposed him could not deny this proof.

23 And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him:

Paul was in Damascus ,preaching for about three years. There is some confusion here as many try to put Paul out in the desert for these three years but we have already been told that he was at Mt. Sanai, in Arabia. for forty days. In Damascus his preaching got him in trouble with the civil authorities as well as the Jewish leadership. See Galatians 1 for more on the Arabian trip.

24 But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him.

These were soldiers of the governor who were watching the gates for Paul. They knew he was somewhere in the city.

25 Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket.

It must have been a big basket. I picture something like those big cotton

baskets, made of white oak strips that people used to pick cotton in when people still picked cotton. I am giving away my age when I mention those baskets. I haven't seen one for around fifty years.

26 And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.

Now Paul is a man with a message and no place to go. The disciples at Jerusalem want nothing to do with him. They did not know of his conversion on the Damascus road but knew all too well of the persecution he had already done at Jerusalem.

27 But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

We are not told that Barnabas had a vision like Ananias did at Damascus but whatever the case he showed up when he was needed. Perhaps he just thought it was the right thing to do. There seems to be a hint in the last part of the verse that Barnabas might have been at Damascus when Paul was preaching there.

28 And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem.

According to Gal.1:18 he was with them fifteen days but during that time saw only Peter and James. It may well be that the other apostles were staying clear of Paul. James, btw, is the Lord's brother and pastor of the church at Jerusalem.

29 And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him.

These were probably the same Greek speaking Jews who had wanted to kill Stephen. They had killed Stephen and now they wanted to kill Saul.

30 Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus.

Tarsus is Paul's home town. Paul stayed at Tarsus until Barnabas came and persuaded him to go and preach at Antioch. He was then at Antioch for about a year. I believe this is one reason the church at Antioch was so strong. The first to send out teachers, evangelists and missionaries as well as being the place where they were first called Christians. This is also the church where we get the manuscripts used for the King James bible.

31 Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

This is where we need to be today. Walking in the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Spirit. We have talked about the fear of the Lord before. It is having a healthy knowledge of what the Lord can, and will, do.

32 And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda.

The Holy Spirit has now switched to Peter. Two miracles are performed and the two are duplicated by Paul in Acts 14:9 and 20:10. Since I don't think anything is in this book by accident I have to believe that God did this deliberately to show the equality of the two apostles.

33 And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy.

This is a very public miracle. Sometimes people asked to be healed but in some cases, like this one, the person is simply told to get up and go. In cases like this one healing seems to come before faith.

34 And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately.

This is the first recorded healing by Peter.

35 And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord.

This is the whole point of miracles. They are usually public in order that others come to Christ. This type of public miracle is no longer done but will be again in the Tribulation and millennial kingdom. Miracles still occur but are private or hidden.

36 Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.

Joppa is Judea's main seaport and is about twelve miles from Lydda. Tabitha is the Aramaic name for the Greek name Dorcas. The same is true of Saul and Paul. Saul is Hebrew and Paul is Roman.

37 And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber.

Early Christians washed their dead out of love and respect. This was also a token of their belief in the resurrection. This, along with the anointing with spices probably helped a little to preserve the body for a little longer.

38 And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that

he would not delay to come to them.

There is no indication that anyone expected Peter to raise Tabitha from the dead. I believe he was sent for mainly for the comfort he could provide in this time of sadness.

39 Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them.

There was no social security in those days so widows were usually very poor. They had no money so Dorcas made clothes for them. Probably, the widows were wearing those clothes when Peter arrived. This is the reason that the church was told to care for the widows who had no family to care for them. This command is still in effect today.

40 But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up.

The Bible records three times where Jesus raised someone from the dead. Until now, none of his followers had attempted a miracle as large as this one. Peter had been present when Jesus raised Jarius' daughter, Luke 8:51-56, and he (Peter) seems to follow the same procedure. So, this is the first resurrection by an apostle.

41 And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive.

I have always wondered what people like Lazarus, Jarius and now Dorcas must have thought as soon as they “woke up” from the dead.

42 And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord.

43 And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.

The apostles did not always have the best of accommodations. The occupation of tanner was at the bottom of the social scale. Imagine the smell with hides lying around waiting for the tanner. There was no refrigeration in those days.

ACTS CHAPTER TEN

1 There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band

called the Italian band,

Now we have a Roman, that would be a Gentile, white man saved along with his household. Remember that we had a black Gentile saved in chapter eight, and an Asian Jew saved in chapter nine. Now we have the three major races covered, clearly showing us that anyone can be saved.

2 A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.

Simply praying to God, and doing good deeds, is not enough. This was a good man, doing the best he knew how to worship God, yet he was lost and on the way to Hell. This also shows us that salvation is not always instantaneous. Now, listen up so I don't get misquoted here. The scripture plainly says "**whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved**". Cornelius has been calling on the Lord but he did not get saved immediately since he did not know what to believe. However, and here it is, God made sure that he did get saved by making sure he got the proper message and knowledge. When he had that he was immediately saved.

3 He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius.

So God provides a way. In this case he sends an angel and then a man.

4 And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.

Notice here that Cornelius has two things going for him. Prayers are to God and alms are to man. God is giving him credit for both but this is not salvation. In order to be saved Cornelius had to learn what to believe and Peter brought that message.

5 And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter:

6 He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.

Simon the tanner did not live in town for reasons we have already discussed.

7 And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually;

Cornelius obeyed the angel immediately. We know, from verse two, that all his family believed in God. The word family as used here means everyone in the house. Family included the servants and at least one soldier. Then Cornelius sent the three men to fetch Peter.

8 And when he had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa.

9 On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour:

God brings these people together. He is working from both directions, taking Peter to Cornelius just as he did with Phillip and the Ethiopian eunuch. Consider how unlikely these meetings are without the intervention of God. The question comes up, "how about the poor native out there in the jungle who never heard the gospel. The implication in that question is that God isn't fair. In the first place, God does not owe anyone salvation except those who call on Him for it. In the second place, as in these two cases, I believe when a person calls on God for salvation, God finds a way to get him, or her, the message.

10 And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance,

This next, like a lot of bible passages, has a double application. It covers the food we eat and it also is the message that all people are acceptable to God.

11 And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending upon him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth:

This hunger was more than just an ordinary hunger. God seems to have created a case of extreme hunger in Peter so that this lesson would not be forgotten. It takes a lot to overcome the type of bigotry the Jews had for Gentiles. Remember that they literally considered them lower than dogs.

12 Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.

The phrase, all manner of fourfooted etc. means anything you can choke down is alright to eat. Picture this big sheet with an angel, or two, holding the corners and all sorts of unclean animals squirming around inside.

13 And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat.

14 But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.

In other words, all his life Peter has kept the Jewish law concerning the food he ate. Now God is telling him he can eat anything. Eating a nice slice of smoked ham would have been horrible to Peter. Do notice that Peter, as usual, is shooting off his mouth before engaging his brain. He has just told God he wasn't going to do what God had commanded.

15 And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.

There are those who believe that God did not do away with the dietary laws at this point. They use verse 28 as their proof text for that viewpoint. Folks, we do not keep the ceremonial laws, which include the dietary laws, and we are told that over and over in the Pauline letters. You can not have it both ways. Either we are under law, or we are under grace. I will take grace.

16 This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven.

That's three times. No doubt to impress Peter with the importance of the vision.

17 Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made enquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate,

18 And called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there.

It's easy to see God at work here. Every part of this transaction is made to harmonize with every other part. Just in the moment when the mind of Peter was filled with what he had seen in the vision, the very event occurs to show him the meaning of what he had seen. This was not a coincidence and is not uncommon. We may not always understand what is going on concerning God's will but it will sometimes become clear by an arrangement of circumstances that indicates the will of God.

19 While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee.

20 Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them.

Again this is God working from both ends. The Holy Spirit doesn't even wait for someone to answer the door and come and get Peter. Instead He tells him to go and meet three men. By this time there can be no doubt in Peter's mind that this is of God.

21 Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what is the cause wherefore ye are come?

These Gentiles want to hear something. Romans 10:17 says; **So then faith [cometh] by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.** The Jews seek a sign but these Gentiles just wanted to hear something. They didn't know what they wanted to hear but they knew Peter had the right words.

22 And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee.

These Gentiles are doing their best to keep Peter's prejudice from interfering with their

mission. Little do they know that Peter has also had a vision. They describe Cornelius this way; that he was a just man, that he worshiped the true God the same as the Jews, and not the false gods of the Gentiles. Finally that he was reputed a pious and good man, and so it would be no problem for the apostles to go unto him.

23 Then called he them in, and lodged them. And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him.

Peter took witnesses and left the next morning. Notice that he did not delay but obeyed the heavenly vision as soon as possible.

It says, certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him; these brethren were six in number, as we know from Acts 11:12. They went out of respect to Peter, and because they were moved at the extraordinary visions that were spoken of. And most important of all, they were caused by God to accompany Peter, that they might testify the grace of God that was come unto the Gentiles, when it might be afterward questioned.

24 And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and he had called together his kinsmen and near friends.

What better gift could Cornelius give than giving his kinsmen and friends a chance to hear the gospel. Probably those spoken of were called near friends, by Cornelius, because they were ones who had forsaken all pagan idolatry, and were worshipers of the true God.

25 And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him.

This happens to God's men from time to time but it is never allowed to continue. Cornelius did not know better but probably considered Peter some kind of God because of the vision.

26 But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man.

Peter is saying "I m just a man,not even an angel".

27 And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together.

Peter now completely understands the vision. God has opened the door to the Gentiles and they will be on equal footing with the Jews as far as salvation is concerned.

28 And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.

Peter walks right in to Cornelius house thus breaking all sorts of taboos. He is also setting an example for the Gentiles and the Jews he brought with him. It's clear that he

understands,from his vision,that the Gentiles are no longer to be considered unclean.

29 Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?

God has no regard for persons as far as moral issues and personal accountability go. People are not created equal. God never said that,Abraham Lincoln did. Everyone is different having different mental abilities,physical abilities,drive and ambition etc.

30 And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing,

31 And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God.

32 Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of one Simon a tanner by the sea side: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee.

Cornelius explains why he has sent for Peter. It is clear that both men are not following their own desires but are following God's instructions. Now,consider why the Jews had such prejudice toward the Gentiles up to this point. It was deliberately put there by God himself in order to preserve the purity of the Jewish nation. Remember from the Old Testament that the Jews were forbidden to intermarry with other races.

33 Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.

This implied that they believed that God saw them, and that they were assembled at his command, and that they intended to listen to his instructions.

34 Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:

Peter begins his sermon here. The phrase “God is no respecter of persons” occurs in the Old Testament and several times in the New Testament. This goes with God's promise;”**whosoever will may come**”. This,through verse 34 is Peter's entire sermon. It takes less than five minutes and a large house full of people get saved. Compare that with Paul preaching for hours in chapter twenty and nobody getting saved. There is a message in that.

35 But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

Anyone can be saved and anyone who fears God and lives justly,to the best of his,or her,ability will get the salvation message somehow. God will find a way.

36 The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:)

Peter has now preached the life, the death, the burial and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Notice that the word that God sent was Jesus of Nazareth.

37 That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached;

Cornelius had heard of Jesus as had everyone who lived in the region. It takes more than hearing. It takes believing.

38 How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.

Jesus did not go for applause, or wealth, or comfort, or ease, but to save the lost and heal the sick. These few words, tells us all about the Savior. It gives us a distinct portrait of his character, as he is different from conquerors and kings, and false prophets, and the mass of men.

39 And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree:

Peter gives the facts about Jesus but also gives his own testimony before, and after, the crucifixion and resurrection.

40 Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly;

You can take the entire salvation message from these few verses.

41 Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.

I'm sure you have heard it said that Jesus only appeared to saved people after His resurrection. This is where that comes from.

42 And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.

Peter concludes with an image of Jesus as the one appointed by God as the judge of humanity. He also makes it clear that salvation is available to anyone.

43 To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

There is that little word "believeth" again. It comes up over and over in reference to salvation.

44 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.

While Peter is speaking he is interrupted by the Holy Spirit because the gift of the Holy Spirit was given to these Gentiles who are now saved by grace,through faith.

45 And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Now we see why God sent the six men with Peter. They get to witness this for themselves . No one in Jerusalem would have believed this if only Peter told the story.

46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,

The tongues,in this case,are for the benefit of Peter and the six Jews. This is proof to them them the Gentiles “got it”. There may be one kind of tongues,foreign languages,or two kinds,instruction before there was a New Testament,but regardless of your view on that point,they are always,without exception,a sign to Jews. If there are tongues spoken there are Jews present.

47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?

Be sure to notice the progression here. There is salvation,then indwelling by the Holy Spirit,then baptism.

48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

The word “Lord” used in this way indicates the Godhead, and covers Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

ACTS CHAPTER ELEVEN

1 And the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God.

2 And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him,

No sooner had Peter come back to Jerusalem that he was jumped by the brethren for eating and fellowshiping with Gentiles.

3 Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.

These men had only heard that Peter went to the Gentiles. They apparently had not heard the whole story that the Gentile household had been saved.

4 But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them, saying,

Peter starts with the vision and tells the whole story. This is the same thing we had in Acts 10.

5 I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, A certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me:

Chapters ten and eleven are important chapters in Acts since they show the progression from one gospel, the gospel of the kingdom, to the new gospel, the gospel of the grace of God. It is always important to remember, in your studies that Jesus, in His earthly ministry was under the law and He kept the Law. This is the turning point.

6 Upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.

This was intended to make a great impression on Peter. It had to be hard for him to overcome his prejudices on both food and Gentiles.

7 And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay and eat.

Notice that Peter did not quote the verse from ten exactly.

8 But I said, Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth.

9 But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.

This is the second time this is put into the text by the Holy Spirit. He means for us to get the fact that all nations are now accepted by God.

10 And this was done three times: and all were drawn up again into heaven.

11 And, behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Caesarea unto me.

Notice how cleverly the Holy Spirit ties this together. Three times the sheet was let down and drawn up again and three men show up immediately. It would be hard, for Peter, to miss that.

12 And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six

brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house:

And if three and three weren't enough the Holy Spirit is also speaking to Peter and giving him instructions.

13 And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter;

14 Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.

This makes it as plain as it can possibly be that Cornelius, and his household, were not saved people when he sent for Peter. Again, these are good people, doing the best they know how to worship God, but they are lost and on the way to Hell.

15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning.

Peter had hardly begun to speak when the Holy Spirit interrupted.

16 Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.

17 Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?

Peter was about to preach Acts 2:38 when he was interrupted by the Holy Spirit falling on these Gentiles. This is important since it shows that now there was to be a different gospel from the kingdom gospel which had been in effect until this point in time. Short version is, they believed and were baptized in the Holy Spirit.

18 When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

The phrase, "they held their peace," They held their peace; shows they were fully satisfied with the reason Peter had given them of his admitting the Gentiles unto baptism, and fellowship with him; gathering from what Peter said, that what he had done was of God.

19 Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.

While it is often said that Paul was the first missionary and that He was sent from Antioch you may notice here that missionaries, in the form of the persecuted Jews who left Jerusalem, had already reached the places mentioned in verse nineteen. The problem was that these people went only to other Jews.

20 And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus.

Though they were born in Cyprus and Cyrene, they now lived in Antioch; which has now become the Jerusalem of the Gentile Christians,

21 And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.

The Lord's power was with these new believers. Many people, including a lot of Gentiles, believed the good news and those people now trusted the Lord.

22 Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch.

Now we come back to Barnabas. I'm surprised that he doesn't get more coverage since he was one of the leading peacemakers between Paul and the Jerusalem church. He was the one who managed to get Paul a hearing before the church leaders when they were all afraid of Paul.

23 Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.

Here is Barnabas encouraging the new church at Antioch. God does tell us that he is a good man and full of faith and the Holy Ghost. I suppose Barnabas doesn't need a footnote in history since he has the rewards that matter.

24 For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord.

25 Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul:

Here is the perfect place for Barnabas to set himself up as dictator of the local church but he doesn't do that. Instead he goes in search of Paul who, he no doubt believed, would do a better job than he could.

26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

Paul and Barnabas and probably others as well, taught for a year. Imagine what you could learn if you were taught by Paul for a year. Well, you can be. It's called the thirteen Pauline epistles. Go over and over those for a year and see how much you learn. This is basically what these people experienced, except they had him in person.

27 And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch.

These were the real article. There were still had prophets since they did not have the whole bible yet. Sometimes today you will hear the term prophets applied to preachers but the office is not the same. A prophet today would be breaking God's law since they would be adding to the scriptures and that is forbidden in the last few verses of the book

of the Revelation. .

28 And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.

Notice that this prophecy is actually done by the Holy Spirit through man, not by man. Dearth is just another word for famine. We use that word today in beekeeping to describe a time when forage is lacking for the bees as it is in times of drought.

29 Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea:

These people weren't rich but shared what they had. I assume, though the bible doesn't say, that the disciples at Jerusalem were in greater need because they had to stay hidden from the authorities.

30 Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

We know from other scriptures that Paul and Barnabas took others with them. You can't have too many witnesses when it comes to handling church money. Satan always has someone around to accuse or criticize, and money is an easy target.

ACTS CHAPTER TWELVE

1 Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church.

This is the grandson of the Herod the Great and a nephew of Herod Antipas who had John the Baptist beheaded. This Herod had a short reign of just three years. The Herod line are slow learners.

2 And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.

The statement, Herod killed James 'with the sword' means that they cut off his head. This was the punishment for political crimes. All of the apostles, except John, were martyred. John lived out his life in exile on the isle of Patmos. This is a political thing since Herod was not a Jew but was having these Christians killed to please the Jews.

3 And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.)

In his desire to increase his popularity Herod imprisons Peter. Most people know

by now that Peter is one of the leading apostles so this really pleases the Jewish leadership.

4 And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.

This is sixteen soldiers assigned to guard Peter. Four groups of four. These soldiers were under threat of death if a prisoner should manage to escape.

5 Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.

There is absolutely nothing that any of the Christians can do for Peter except to pray.

6 And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison.

Peter is chained to and sleeping between two soldiers. There are two more guarding the door. This has to be the last watch of the night since, if it had been earlier, Peter's escape would have been discovered when the watch changed.

7 And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands.

The angel smote Peter on the side. Later in the chapter we will see this angel smite someone else with very different results. I like that word. Be sure to notice that even under the threat of death Peter slept soundly. He knows that either he will be in Heaven tomorrow or that somehow God will get him out of this mess. Remember that Jesus had promised that he would grow to be an old man.

8 And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me.

Through all this commotion none of the guards woke up. Even the two guarding the door slept through it. This has to be supernatural. God put them to sleep and kept them asleep.

9 And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision.

Peter's rescue happens so quickly that he doesn't know if he is dreaming, or not.

10 When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the

iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him.

This shows that there was more than one angel involved. As in most supernatural cases, there were probably many angels in the near vicinity, ready to do whatever was necessary. The angel departed when he was no longer needed.

11 And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews.

As the angel leaves Peter comes fully awake and knows this is real and not a dream. The Jewish leadership is looking forward to seeing Peter killed as James was.

12 And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying.

13 And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda.

Rhoda knew Peter's voice from hearing him preach and because Peter was a good friend of the family.

14 And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate.

This is almost comical. Here we have dedicated, praying, church members praying for Peter and they don't even believe it when God answers their prayers. The servant girl is too excited to open the door and the other believers doubt that it can be Peter.

15 And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel.

This reflects the belief, based on Jesus' words in Matthew 18:10, that we have a guardian angel who watches over us. The Matthew passage says; **Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.** Now, I have to say, I don't consider that one verse proof that we, as adults, have a guardian angel. Maybe we do, but the passage applies to children and if children did not have one none of them would live to be adults.

16 But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened the door, and

saw him, they were astonished.

Peter is in a hurry. He wants to let everyone know the Lord has delivered him then he wants to get out of town as soon as possible.

17 But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go shew these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place.

Peter gives God the glory for delivering him. The James mentioned is James, the Lord's brother, who was pastor of the Jerusalem church. Be sure to notice that Peter, claimed by the Catholics, to be the first pope is never in charge of anything. The closest he comes is to be one of the three pillars of the church mentioned in Galatians 2:9

18 Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter.

Imagine this scene. The soldiers knew he was gone but that was impossible. Furthermore they knew they would be killed for letting him escape. If I had been one of these soldiers I would have been on my way to parts unknown.

19 And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judaea to Caesarea, and there abode.

Herod probably assumed the guards had been bribed. In any case he had them put to death. Who went down to Caesarea? I take it to be Herod since that is the person we have been speaking about.

20 And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon: but they came with one accord to him, and, having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, desired peace; because their country was nourished by the king's country.

21 And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them.

Josephus, the historian, says the robe was of woven silver threads and that Herod placed himself on a high throne above the people. This seems to indicate that Herod set up things to make himself appear a god.

22 And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man.

Herod's life would have been spared if he had immediately rebuked, and

corrected, the crowd. Instead he enjoyed basking in the praise of man.

23 And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.

The angel ,in this case,is not a messenger. He is sent to kill a man. I put this in because you will often hear,from people who should know better, that angels are always messengers. Not in this case. This is the second time the angel smites someone in this chapter. First to wake Peter and now to kill Herod. These worms were no doubt internal parasites and ,from the text,came on suddenly. In other words,the angel struck and worms ate Herod. The historian Josephus says Herod died five days later but my King James says he was eaten by worms and gave up the ghost.

24 But the word of God grew and multiplied.

Be sure to notice in this verse that the word grew and multiplied. There is only one thing that can do that and that is a living organism. So the word of God is a living organism.

25 And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.

That is,they returned to Antioch after carrying the offering to Jerusalem.

ACTS CHAPTER THIRTEEN

1 Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

This is a turning point for the church. Until now there had been little effort to win Gentiles. Now things are about to change. The word prophets comes up again in this verse. This is a church position that modern con artist churches try to keep. This position has been done away as we now have the complete bible.

2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

Saul and Barnabas didn't get to pick their traveling companions. These men were picked by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is about to send them specifically to the Gentiles. We know that from the places they went in later verses.

3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

They fasted and prayed because this is serious business. This was the prophets and teachers at Antioch, and not the Apostles who did this. In other words, it was the local church.

4 So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.

So, they are sent by the Lord and this is the way it should be done today. .

5 And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister.

The gospel is still going mostly to the Jews with very few Gentiles saved at this point. Notice that John is the minister to Paul and Barnabas. In other words, he is the gofer.

6 And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Barjesus:

Paphos is the provincial capital. Notice the false prophet. There is always a false prophet present when someone is being led to the Lord. They seem to pop up at the worst possible time. Count on Satan showing up. It might be something as simple as a phone call, or a family member, that interrupts.

7 Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God.

Here is a man who wants to hear the word of God.

8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith.

This is Satan's little helper here. Sergius Paulus, the ruler of Cyprus, had a private magician and this magician was a Jew. Usually, the Jews did not do magic because back in Deut 18 God had forbidden them to have anything to do with witchcraft and magic (and yes, that includes horoscopes). In spite of that, Bar-Jesus, the court magician, did magic. His other name, Elymas, means 'magician'. If his master became a Christian, Elymas would lose his job as magician and he knew that.

9 Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him.

I think we covered this before. Saul is his Hebrew name and Paul is his Gentile

name. The Holy Ghost recognizes Satan of course.

10 And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?

11 And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.

This would certainly get Satan's helper's attention.

12 Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.

The ruler saw what happened. But this did not convince him completely. Paul and Barnabas taught him about Jesus. Only then, 'the ruler believed and trusted in the Lord.

13 Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem.

No reason is given for John Mark leaving. He may have been upset that Barnabas was taking second position as these two were cousins. The scriptures do not give a reason and the reason, at this point, is not important.

14 But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down.

This is a different Antioch from the one that sent out Barnabas and Paul. This name was widely used because a ruler, in 281 BC had both a father and a son named Antiochus. He named sixteen cities in honor of them.

15 And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.

They are called brethren here, not because they are Christians but because they are Jews. The priests have no idea at this point that they are dealing with Christians. Notice that the service consisted of reading from the Torah. There was no "preaching" as we know it.

16 Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience.

Here we go on Paul's longest recorded sermon. The sermon goes on through verse 41 and covers Israel's history and concluding that Jesus was the

fulfillment of all that had been promised. Be sure to notice the difference in ,Paul's and Peter's earlier sermon, and modern sermons. These are short, and to the point. They teach their listener something about the scriptures and the Lord Jesus Christ. In both cases people were saved.

17 The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an high arm brought he them out of it.

They are being reminded that God exalted them above other nations, and because of that He expected more of them than others. God's plan was to hold the Jews up as an example to other nations.

18 And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness.

The Israelites began to murmur against God almost immediately after leaving Egypt. They complained about almost everything, even including the manna He provided. I think the comment there was, "we loath this light bread".

19 And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Chanaan, he divided their land to them by lot.

You will find these seven nations listed in Deut.7:12 and in Judges.

20 And after that he gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet.

This was not God's desire, nor plan. God's plan was that He would be the ruler of Israel. This will finally come to pass in the millennium.

21 And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years.

So Israel's first king was not from the tribe of Judah but a Benjamite.

22 And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave their testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will.

This was done because Saul rebelled against God in sparing the sheep, the oxen and property of Amalek, together with Agag the king, when he had been commanded to destroy everything. He was put to death in a battle with the Philistines, 1Sa 22:1-6. The phrase, "when he removed him," refers probably to his rejection as a king, and not to his death; for David was anointed king before the death of Saul.

23 Of this man's seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus:

Our Savior's name is added to show that he truly was what he was said to be. Otherwise, it could be anybody.

24 When John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.

While John was still preaching, Jesus came on the scene and John recognized that his ministry was over and that Jesus should come to the forefront. If John had been the type we see so many of today he would have kept a following and been in opposition to the ministry of Jesus. No doubt he could have used the excuse that he was "helping" Jesus. This brings to mind Paul and Barnabas at Antioch where the same situation occurred. Barnabas willingly put Paul ahead of himself.

25 And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not he. But, behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of his feet I am not worthy to loose.

John began, and ended, preaching Jesus Christ. Paul has now taken it up and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is the central theme of his preaching. In this sermon the message centers on the death, burial and resurrection of Christ and this is as it should be in all true gospel preaching.

26 Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent.

Paul covers everyone in this message. It is addressed to men and brethren, the Jews present, and whosoever among you that feareth God, these would be Gentile proselytes.

27 For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him.

Here Paul takes a shot at the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, saying "they have rejected Him so now you get a chance".

28 And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain.

Verses 28, 29 and 30 are the "meat" of Paul's sermon as it should be of sermons today, but seldom is.

29 And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him

down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre.

30 But God raised him from the dead:

While we focus on the cross and the suffering there, and what it means in taking away our sin, let us never forget that without the resurrection none of it would matter. If Jesus had stayed in that grave then you and I would be going to Hell.

31 And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people.

For forty days between his resurrection and ascension, Christ was seen, not only by the apostles, but of the Galilean women which traveled with the group and came up with him to Jerusalem. He was also by more than five hundred at once. God did this so none could deny His resurrection. In a courtroom today you could probably sway a jury of Agnostics with numbers like these.

32 And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers,

The promise here refers to all that had been spoken in the Old Testament respecting the life, sufferings, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

33 God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.

The statement, "**Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee**" is a problem for many. Finally I noticed that this statement is right in the middle of verses 33-35 and realized that we are talking about the resurrection here. Indeed, by raising Him up from the dead He has begotten Him.

34 And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David.

The prophet Isaiah entertained no doubt as to the fulfillment of this prophecy when he wrote it. Paul assures his listeners that the "sure mercies of David" are now sealed and established to all. Since Jesus is risen from the dead therefore all the promises and blessings which were made to David are now fulfilled through Jesus Christ, David's prophetic son.

35 Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

This is the same Psalm, 16:10, that Peter quoted to his listeners back in Acts:2. It means that God will not allow Jesus body to decay.

36 For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption:

David went into the grave and his body decayed as is normal.

37 But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption.

It is not the fact that He rose after three days .Even in that short period decay would have started. Remember Martha's concern that Lazarus had been in the ground four days and was stinking by that time. God kept the body of Jesus supernaturally preserved.

38 Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins:

Paul called his audience 'brothers' and by that he means that they are Jews like himself. Now he gave to them the main part of his message. Jesus forgives sins! Sin is a trap and there is only one way out of that trap. Jesus is the only way out of that trap.

39 And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.

There is that word believe again. Paul added the words, "from the heart". How many times have you heard preachers add things to the simple gospel message of salvation? That's a rhetorical question, of course,since all of us hear it all too often. We are assured over and over in the gospel of John and the Pauline epistles that true belief and confession of that belief is what it takes to get a person saved.

40 Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets;

41 Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.

Paul is quoting Hab 1:5 which says;**Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for [I] will work a work in your days,which] ye will not believe, though it be told [you.]**Schofield has a good note on this Habakkuk passage. He says,"Verse 5 anticipates the dispersion , of Israel,among,the nations. While Israel is dispersed God will work a work that Israel will not believe. This "work"is prophecy of the death,burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and the calling out of the Gentiles.

42 And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath.

The rebellious Jews left the synagogue first then the Gentiles asked to hear more of the word.

43 Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.

So, not the whole trip was wasted. There were apparently many Jews and Gentiles saved here in spite of the religious crowd.

44 And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.

It is during this sermon that the turning point, in Asia, happens. I mentioned three turning points in the book of Acts which show a gradual turning from the Jews to the Gentiles. God's word always goes to the Jew first. He gives them every chance.

45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.

This is the same situation Jesus faced in Jerusalem. It is political envy. The multitudes now wanted to hear Paul and Barnabas and not the Jewish leaders. The outcome is the same as well. The false accusers accuse them of blasphemy since they really have no argument.

46 Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.

This is the Jews rejecting the Messiah yet again. This is also the turning point where God rejects the Jews, as a group, and turns to the Gentiles, as a group. There are three times in the book of Acts where the Jews refuse Jesus Christ. Here, in Asia they rejected Him. Again, in Acts 18:6 they rejected Him in Europe and finally, in Acts 28:28 they rejected Him in Rome which represents the rest of the world.

47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.

Paul's calling was to the Gentiles but he had a burden for his brethren, the Jews. Now that they have rejected him he is finally ready to turn completely to the Gentiles. Be sure to notice that Paul points out to the Jews that it is they who

should have been a light to the Gentiles.

48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

The Calvinist's use this verse to prove that we are pre-ordained to either Heaven or Hell. The word "ordained" does not fix anything permanently. Every person has the free will to either accept, or reject, the Lord Jesus Christ.

49 And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.

This part was a success since people coming from other places heard the gospel and carried it back to their own cities.

50 But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts.

This is the same bunch that stirred up the trouble in verse 45. They have now persuaded the men and women of the city to turn against Paul and reject the gospel message altogether. You have to wonder what people who have heard a very clear presentation of the gospel, and rejected it, think one second after they pass into eternity.

51 But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium.

Shaking the dust off their feet is a serious thing. In effect, it is giving up on this group and turning them over to Satan.

52 And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.

Even though they have been run out of the city, they are satisfied that they have done their best. The Holy Ghost gives them peace and joy even though the city rejected the message.

ACTS CHAPTER FOURTEEN

1 And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed.

The same thing happened in this city that happened in the last city they visited. They began in the synagogue for two reasons. First, they are still trying to win Jews and second, it was the logical place to meet since this was the place where

people went to learn. We have the same job today, to teach Jesus to those who do not know about Him and to teach those who do know how to win others.

2 But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren.

When Paul and Barnabas get busy for God the Devil gets busy against them. This is another of the many things that were true then and are still true now. If a church, or a Christian, gets busy for God, look for Satan to show up.

3 Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

So they stayed here in Iconium for a long time and led many to the Lord. They are still using signs and wonders to win people so this is still primarily for the Jews. Notice a subtle change here where it seems the Lord now grants the use of signs and wonders where before they were more or less automatic.

4 But the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles.

Finally the hostile Jews managed to get organized and begin to stir up some real trouble for Paul and Barnabas.

5 And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use them despitefully, and to stone them,

They had been able to preach for a long time at Iconium but now they were, in effect, run out of town. We are not told just how long they preached at Iconium and because of this an accurate timeline of Paul's missionary journeys is impossible.

6 They were ware of it, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about:

7 And there they preached the gospel.

One thing is consistent about these two, they never stop preaching the gospel.

8 And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked:

Lystra was a Roman city and since Paul was a Roman citizen, perhaps Paul thought that he would be safe there. There were not many Jews. In Lystra so there may not have been a synagogue there. So, Paul preached in the street. Sometimes people ask about the street preachers that we have in our local area and whether these are effective in leading people to the Lord. The short answer

to that is no, but there are other reasons to preach on the street. First, God has promised that his word would not return to Him void and second, it gives these young preachers experience in handling rough situations. Now, that said, occasionally someone does get saved by street preaching so for that reason alone it is worthwhile. Now, while at Lystra Paul saw a man who could not walk. What happened next astonished the crowd. They were about to witness a miracle.

9 The same heard Paul speak: who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed,

10 Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked.

Paul saw that the man had faith. He told him to stand up. The man stood up. He not only stood, he leaped.

11 And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men.

There are still cults today who worship these gods of ancient mythology. These cults would be considered Satanic. We actually have Churches of Satan in our area. There is one called The Modern Church of Satan in Pensacola. If any of you are interested in joining they have a website.

12 And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker.

The people spoken of are Gentiles, and have no Old Testament, and so, have no knowledge of the true God.

13 Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people.

Jupiter and Mercury were important gods to the people of Lystra. The people in Lystra were excited at the thought that these gods had come to visit them. They wanted to welcome them and do sacrifices to them.

14 Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out,

Notice that these missionaries never, never, never accept glory that belongs to God. They not only do not accept it but they are horrified by the thought. One other thing to notice before we leave this verse. Barnabas is called an apostle. There are a total of seventeen men called apostles in the New Testament.

15 And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like

passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein:

Paul and Barnabas do everything in their power to stop the people from worshiping them, even to the point of tearing their clothes.

16 Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.

God had not gone to the Gentiles before. He allowed them to do whatever they pleased in living their lives. The bottom line here is that a huge number of Gentiles died and went to Hell over the centuries. According to the news media, yesterday we had a funeral procession over nineteen miles long to accompany a lost person to the cemetery. It does not matter how great you were on this earth when your life is over and you instantly find yourself burning in Hell. Stop sometime and think of how many people went to Hell just today.

17 Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.

Even without God going directly to the Gentiles He still had a witness in the seasons, the rain, the crops ect. We are told in other scriptures that even the Heavens declare the glory of God.

18 And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them.

Notice that the apostles did not compromise. It would have been easy to accept the worship and sacrifices. Go along to get along is what many Christians do with the lost world.

19 And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead.

Perhaps some time had passed when the Jewish leaders arrived and Paul and Barnabas had persuaded some people to become Christians. These Jewish leaders may have deliberately followed Paul and Barnabas and planned all along to stop them.

20 Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

It is hard to imagine why Paul would get up and go back into the city which had just stoned him. If, and I do say if, Paul actually died and went to Heaven that might help to explain it. If you saw the glory of Heaven would you want to come

back to this evil world. There is a passage in 2 Cor: 11;24-25 where Paul refers to being caught up into the third heaven. This may well be this stoning. A person stoned to death is literally broken to pieces. Imagine the people of the city when Paul calmly walks back in.

21 And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch,

They are going back the same route in reverse and teaching as they go. They also take pains to set the churches in order and appoint elders to oversee these churches.

22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

This must undoubtedly refer to the trials and tribulations of the church through all the ages. There is a book called "Trail of Blood" which is a short history of the church and should be read by every Christian.

23 And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

One thing to notice about the early church is that they did not have "leading" churches. The nearest thing to that was the church at Jerusalem which did influence the local churches spiritually but did not rule over them.

24 And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia.

These people did not have denominations nor ,for the most part,even buildings. All the Christians of a city met as a group. The larger the group the more elders it took to meet the needs and take care of them. The leadership is now Pastor,or pastors plural who are the spiritual leaders. What they say about spiritual matters goes,period. Then they had elders who took care of business and the day to day running of the church,then deacons who ministered to the people. In our modern churches these jobs often overlap. It would probably be better for the church if they did not overlap. Most of our Independent Baptist churches are too small to have men for all of these positions. We probably need less churches and more members.

25 And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia:

26 And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled.

Now they are back to their home church. This missionary trip did what it was supposed to do. It got people saved, it got people trained and it got churches started.

27 And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.

This would be like our visiting missionaries. They give an account of what has been done on the trip. In just a short while they will be leaving again on another mission trip.

28 And there they abode long time with the disciples.

We mentioned the lack of a time line back in verse five. For some reason God has left us in the dark about the time line of Paul's missionary journeys. This is the period when the time isn't given.

ACTS CHAPTER FIFTEEN

1 And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.

You see, you have to DO something in order to be saved. In this case it is circumcision. This is just one more heresy and these men were false professors. They seem to have followed Paul everywhere he went and they did their best to turn the new believers back to the law. We have this same thing going on, in churches, today. Now, no one says, "we are going back under the law", but that is the effect. You must be baptized, you must speak in tongues and have hair a certain length, your shirt must have long sleeves, your dress must be a certain length, you must not wear any but steel rimmed glasses, you must not eat pork, you must wear a tie, and above all, you must not have an electric guitar in church. All of these sorts of things are legalism and all of them, with the exception of pork, made up by some man somewhere along the line and picked up by others along the way. How about this one? You take the Lord's supper, then you must get up, without saying a word to anyone, and leave the building, singing. That one was Berryhill Baptist. All of those things are ridiculous and have nothing whatever to do with salvation or the Christian walk.

2 When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and

certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.

Paul and Barnabas have taught nothing but salvation by grace,through faith. I expect that dissension and disputation came very close to a fist fight. At any rate,they are going to the home church to get this settled once and for all. I can not help but wonder what Paul and Barnabas would have done if the Jerusalem council had backed the false Christians. That isn't too far fetched considering how the Jews felt about Gentiles.

3 And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren.

Some members of the church began the journey with them but went only part way just as company. There had been a disagreement, but the people in the church showed that they cared about Paul and Barnabas. The journey was 300 miles long. That's a long,hot,dusty walk. On their way, Paul and Barnabas visited the churches in Phoenicia and Samaria.

4 And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them.

By the time this council convened Gentiles had been joining the church for more than ten years. They are simply saved,and baptized,in that order. Only a few Gentiles at first,Cornelius and his family and friends has now grown into a large group which is growing daily.

5 But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.

Be sure to notice here that there are saved Pharisees. Those two words,saved and Pharisee,don't seem to belong in the same sentence. The second heresy turns up here. You must DO something in order to stay saved. Now according to these false teachers,you must be circumcised and keep the law of Moses. The majority of Christian denominations today teach these two heresies. You must do something to be saved and you must do something to keep your salvation once you get it. What about the sinners prayer? Some say that's a work. The sinners prayer is not necessary for salvation BUT it does give you an anchor point. You can then say,that is when I asked the Lord to save my soul. As far as I'm concerned that's a good thing.

6 And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.

7 And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.

Peter is making reference to Cornelius where God revealed to him that God makes no distinction between Jew and Gentile. Think about this situation. If the Jerusalem church is meeting to decide whether Gentiles must keep parts of the Jewish law then it stands to reason that they were keeping parts of the law themselves. We usually assume that the Jerusalem, or mother church, is straight. If we take this into consideration, they were not but were still mixing law and grace.

8 And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us;

9 And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.

I like these two verses because they tie in directly with Paul's statement on salvation in Romans 2:8-9 where he says salvation is based entirely on belief, from the heart, and confession with the mouth. We are told why that is in these verses, because God knows the heart and what is in it.

10 Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?

Peter said that the Law was like 'a heavy load'. We can't keep it and we should not expect others to keep it.

11 But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.

Look at Peter's doctrinal statement here. Here is the "first pope" saying that belief and grace are enough for salvation. This is one of the two things that make the Christian faith different from all other religions. We cannot save ourselves from the results of sin. Obeying rules does not bring us close to God. There is only one way to receive salvation and that is by the grace of the Lord Jesus' Christ. That is one reason, the other is that he is risen.

12 Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.

Did you notice that word multitude? Paul and Barnabas were not putting together small congregations. They are getting big groups of people saved. God

has put His stamp of approval on their ministry by the signs and wonders they do.

13 And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me:

James is the half brother of Jesus and the leader of the Jerusalem church. It is interesting that he was not a believer until after the resurrection. In other words James found it impossible to believe that Jesus was the Son of God until after He was raised from the dead.

14 God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.

James is about to show that God has always planned to take, out of the Gentile nations, a people for His name. He uses the Old Testament prophets to prove his point.

15 And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written,

James is quoting Amos 9:11-12. Let's compare the passage in Amos with the way it was quoted by James. **In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old: {9:12} That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the LORD that doeth this.** That was the quotation from Amos. Notice in the next verse that James does not quote it exactly but it is close. Now, understand that James was not reading this but was quoting from memory. This shows me that even a person of limited education, like James, he was a carpenter's son, had a great knowledge of scripture.

16 After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up:

So, after God finishes calling a people from the Gentiles, He will return and rebuild the nation of Israel. This is speaking of the millennial kingdom after the great Tribulation period. The order is this; the Rapture of the Church, then the seven years of tribulation, then the Lords return to the earth to set up His 1000 year reign, then, and let's not overlook the last one, eternity with the Lord.

17 That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.

Notice that word residue. That's an awful word when describing what is left of humanity. This is after the Tribulation period, after the battle of Armageddon and after the nations which were against Israel have been cast into Hell. There just

aren't many people left.

18 Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.

Here is your proof text for God knowing all before the foundation of the world. God is never caught by surprise. He knows what you and I are going to do and He knows what He is going to do.

19 Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God:

20 But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.

These things that James warns against are all practiced by the pagans of that time. They have nothing to do with salvation but have to do with testimony. The business about things strangled and blood go together. If an animal is strangled the blood is still in the flesh. So, you might say, "I don't eat blood". Some people do deliberately as for instance African natives who bleed their cattle and drink the blood. How about that blood sausage made over in southwest Louisiana and considered a delicacy there? How about liver which is full of it? Hotdogs? They don't waste anything. The list goes on. Abstain from pollutions of idols bears some explanation. This is the attachment of evil spirits to an idol. This can then transfer to the worshiper and then to another party through fornication. If you wonder why homosexuality, and other sexual sins, have spread so fast in this country, here is your reason. Proof text for these outrageous statements is found in 1 Corinthians 6:14-18.

21 For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.

Every Jew loved the bible stories about Moses. For that matter so do we. Look at the popularity of that movie "The Ten Commandments" as an example. That is all the "bible" some people ever get.

22 Then pleased it the apostles and elders with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas and Silas, chief men among the brethren:

Notice that every time apostles go anywhere with a message, or with money, they always take witnesses to back their story. This is just common sense and keeps the nay sayers from getting a foothold.

Now, I want to read these next three verses together since they go together and need to be commented together.

23 And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia.

Notice that it is all three groups of people, who are in agreement, and send these letters.

24 Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment:

These are letters of apology for allowing the false teachers to go out from their church.

25 It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,

First, let me say that verse 25 ended with a comma so the thought goes on into the next verse. What I wanted to get to in these three verses is the absolute laughable mess some of the commentators make of this. Then there are some who get it right and some who skip over it altogether. The problem here is that you can find a lot in these verses that deal with pastoral authority, or the lack, depending on your point of view. Let me say this before I go further. The pastor has absolute authority in spiritual matters but he is not the head of the local church. That position is reserved for the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, getting past that, we have an example of a church business meeting in these verses. After what seems to be a long discussion, James, the pastor, made a statement, (that's a decree), and it plainly says the apostles, the elders and the whole church agreed. Now some of the commentators said, "well nobody voted". It doesn't say anybody voted. It also doesn't say they didn't. Obviously they had some way to come to agreement so whether it was a vote as we use it, doesn't really matter. Let me close this by saying: church politics should be congregational. All of the members are equal. Scripture for that can be found at Matt 20:24-28 and again at Matt 23:5-12 where the Lord Himself is correcting those would have placed themselves above the others. There is also especially 1 Peter 5:1 - 3 which also deals with this. There are also the references in the book of the Revelation which mention the Nicolaitanes as those God hates. These are people who would take power over the laity of the local church. Here is the verse from Revelation chapter two, verse 6. **But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.** There are three things God hates; sin, Esau and the deeds of the Nicolaitanes. So, you leaders who would be dictators, take warning.

26 Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

27 We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth.

These men are sent to bear witness that the letters were not forged.

28 For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things;

The apostles were under the direct influence of the Holy Spirit, which would teach them all things. Keep in mind that they did not have the entire New Testament as yet.

29 That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.

Remember that if you do these things it is not for salvation but for testimony and in some cases for your physical well being. Keep in mind what was said earlier about demons attaching to idols.

30 So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle:

31 Which when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation.

They were happy because they did not have to become Jews and be circumcised. All they had to do was accept these four rules.

32 And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them.

The word prophets as it is used here seems to be interchangeable with preacher. I think these were some of both since the Holy Spirit is continually showing them things they should teach and preach.

33 And after they had tarried there a space, they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles.

I said earlier that there were at least 17 apostles. I have since found that there are 24 apostles mentioned in the New Testament. Thank you Brother Dake. His list includes the Lord Jesus Christ and since the definition of the word apostle means one sent with full authority to act for another it fits.

34 Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still.

Silas decides to remain at Antioch and that turns out to be a good thing. God always plans ahead.

35 Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching

the word of the Lord, with many others also.

See the last part of that verse. The church at Antioch was full of preachers and teachers.

36 And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do.

It is time for Paul's second missionary journey. He has gone out and established churches, he has come back and reported to the home church, then gone down to Jerusalem and taken care of business. Now it is time to go out again. Notice the difference in the way most of our missionaries do today. They go and stay. Now that's not wrong, just different. Paul and Barnabas planted churches and trained people to take over. Some still do that today.

37 And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark.

John Mark was the nephew of Barnabas so the family ties had something to do with Barnabas insisting on taking Mark.

38 But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.

What you have here is two spirit filled men who can not agree. Their contention is so strong that they part ways and go in different directions. There is some good in this as God gets two missionary journeys for the price of one. Joel O would have told them to get over their differences since God is love. All kidding aside, what we get from this is that sometimes Christians can not agree. In that case, separate for a time to cool off. Later on, Mark does accompany Paul and is a valued gopher.

39 And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus;

Men and women with strong convictions have a hard time getting along. This is why we can not fellowship with other denominations. If you have strong convictions about salvation, for instance, how can you fellowship with a Church of Christ member who also has strong convictions. The answer is, you can't. If you can then one of you doesn't have strong convictions about your doctrine. One last thing to notice about this verse. Barnabas was from Cyprus so basically he took Mark and went home. We don't hear much more from Barnabas but Mark is a great help to Paul later. We are told in chapter four that Barnabas is a good and godly man, so I think we can safely assume that he continued in God's work

at a local level.

40 And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God.

Both sets of missionaries go with the churches blessing. Silas had come from the church at Jerusalem and turned out to be a good partner for Paul on this second missionary journey.

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

In other words, they went and finished the job that God had given them.

ACTS CHAPTER SIXTEEN

1 Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek:

Remember what happened to Paul at Lystra. This is where he was stoned by the people. This is a couple of years later and he is going back to visit the church he helped to start. The Timothy mentioned is the same Timothy Paul wrote two books of instruction for. There are several interesting things centered around Timothy. God mentions that his mother is a saved Jewess, that is, she comes from the line of Shem and his father is a Greek from the line of Japheth. This is a mixed marriage and there is no condemnation of it. This is the only mixed marriage mentioned in the New Testament. Now, that said, mixed marriages between descendants of Shem and descendants of Ham are forbidden but all of the verses concerning these are in the Old Testament. The reason for not intermarrying with the descendants of Ham go all the way back to Genesis, chapter six where Canaan, Ham's son, is placed under a curse for a homosexual act done by his father Ham. The reason the curse was placed on Canaan instead of Ham is that Ham had already been blessed. Apparently if one already has the blessing then a curse could not be placed on that individual. Here is the curse; Genesis 9:25 **And he said, Cursed [be] Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. {9:26} And he said, Blessed [be] the LORD God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. {9:27} God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant.** Before I leave that passage from Genesis let me say something about Japheth's descendants. Read 9:27 again. This is a prophecy and where has it happened? Japheth's descendants are the Europeans while some of Shem's people are Orientals and the American Indian, especially those without Viking influence. So, here we have Japheth enlarged and dwelling in the tents of Shem.

2 Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium.

We are back to talking about Timothy now.

3 Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek.

Why circumcise Timothy when he did not circumcise Titus? He had also dealt harshly with those false teachers who wanted to require circumcision of saved Gentiles. I can only suppose it was done because Timothy was half Jew, but this whole thing seems inconsistent on Paul's part. This next is quoted from an internet source and may explain it as well as anything. *"The Jews considered that Timothy was a Jew. That was because he had a Jewish mother. He should have received circumcision when he was a baby. Perhaps his father stopped this. Paul realised that Timothy would be an excellent helper, but Paul did not want to upset the other Jewish Christians. He circumcised Timothy so that they would accept him (Timothy). This did not mean that Paul wanted Gentile *Christians to receive circumcision".* In other words, this was done for the good of the ministry and not to keep the law.

4 And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem.

Copies of the Jerusalem decrees were given to each church along Paul's circuit. I think we can say Paul was the first "circuit rider" except that he probably walked.

5 And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.

That verse says the numbers were increasing daily. That means that it was not just Paul and Silas's preaching that was causing increase. This had to be evangelism by every member. We would say they were "on fire" for the Lord and were spreading the gospel as fast as they could.

6 Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia,

The party of Paul, Silas and Timothy soon find themselves in new territory. They set out across Galatia, that is modern Turkey and are told by the Holy Spirit not to go into Asia. They consider going north but the Holy Spirit also forbids that. Now, this is not because God doesn't want the gospel preached in Asia but is simply the Holy Spirit's way of guiding Paul to where He wants him to go. In this

case He wants Paul in Troas.

7 After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.

Bithynia would have taken Paul further north but the Holy Spirit was not allowing that. He keeps pointing Paul to Europe.

8 And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas.

Troas is ancient Troy.

9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us.

Looking at this journey you can see the hand of the Lord guiding Paul to Europe. Every time Paul tries to go in another direction the Holy Spirit turns him back to the direction of Europe.

10 And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.

Notice the writing shift from third person to first person. This is because Luke, the author of Acts, has joined the group. He is called by God to go along and preach with the others. No doubt, since he is a physician, God also wants him along to take care of Paul, and Timothy's, poor health.

11 Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis;

12 And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days.

The party now consists of Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke. Since Paul and Silas are later alone it can be assumed that Timothy and Luke dropped off at Philippi, and since there was no falling out it must have been for some church duties there. These four are back together later.

13 And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither.

No mention is made of a synagogue in Philippi so the Jewish community was probably small.

14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of

Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

Lydia sold purple cloth and this could be afforded only by the wealthy. She worshiped God as best she knew how. This is another of those cases where God made sure someone gets the right gospel message if their heart is right. She heard Paul and God opened her heart.

15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.

The fact that Lydia could invite Paul and his group to stay in her house indicates that she had some wealth as only a wealthy person would have had a house with that much space. Lydia is also the first known convert on the European continent and her house is the first known church in Europe.

16 And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying:

This is a demonic spirit and does not have actual power to predict the future. This spirit would have a real talent for false prophecy.

17 The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation.

Does anyone else find it odd that an evil spirit would follow Paul and call attention to itself by pointing to the way of salvation.

18 And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.

Both the girl, and the evil spirit are telling the truth so why not let her continue with the free advertisement? First, Jesus did not allow devils to witness for Him. In addition, Paul and Silas would have been giving the impression that they approved of divination and fortune telling if they allowed her to continue. Furthermore, this whole thing is of Satan, who was attempting to make the people think Paul and Silas were in league with evil spirits.

19 And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the marketplace unto the rulers,

Instead of being glad that the girl is rid of the evil spirit these only worry about their lost income.

20 And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city,

The girl's owners, she was a slave girl, dragged Paul and Silas into the marketplace. This was a place where people sold things but was also the center of public life.

21 And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans.

The Romans went to great lengths to protect their religions. This is why the Jews were banned from Rome. Now Paul and company were charged with trying to introduce a new religion. Now you know that these men really did not care about that, they just wanted to be rid of Paul and his friends.

22 And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them.

Now the crowd joins in the attack on Paul.

23 And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely:

These two were severely beaten and then put in stocks. The stocks were constructed to cause misery and pain by stretching the feet and legs too far apart for comfort. Nevertheless these two could sing and pray.

24 Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.

There is no doubt that Paul and Silas are led by God. Be sure to notice that God leads them into persecution and imprisonment. He did not promise Christians an easy time.

25 And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.

This is the first gospel concert ever held in Europe. Their backs hurt, their legs and feet hurt from the stocks, so they sing praises to God.

26 And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.

This time God answered prayer by sending a great earthquake. God obviously has this earthquake well under control since even with the very foundations shaking the prison stood and did not collapse on the prisoners. This earthquake is strange in another way. Apparently no one else in town felt it. Nobody seemed

to get excited.

27 And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.

The jailer intends to kill himself since he knows the Romans will do that and more. Remember what happened to Paul's guards in chapter 12 :19. Herod had them all killed and they were probably tortured before they were killed.

28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.

We aren't told why the other prisoners did not leave. Perhaps with all the singing and praying going on they recognized that this was from God, or perhaps they were unable to flee because God was holding them there.

29 Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas,

This man is really shaken. He has heard the singing and praying. He has felt the great earthquake, and he has found that no one left. In other words, he has seen God in action and he knows it.

30 And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

The jailer realizes he is no longer in charge. Now he wants what they have.

31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

There is that word "believe" again. It just keeps popping up in the Pauline epistles. True belief is in the mind and heart. Salvation is by a person, Jesus Christ. Notice that you are to believe ON someone. It is not a system nor a religious practice.

32 And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.

The members of the house do not get saved just because the head of the house gets saved. Salvation is still a personal thing and each must believe and call on the Lord for himself. We can safely assume that each person in this household believed, was saved and received the Holy Spirit. We know that everyone was then baptized.

33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.

The jailer cleans them up then he is baptized. Notice the order. Belief, salvation, indwelling by the Holy Spirit and then baptism.

34 And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.

Don't miss the immediate change in the jailer once he was saved. He has washed the prisoners stripes and now has invited them to dinner.

35 And when it was day, the magistrates sent the serjeants, saying, Let those men go.

Paul's knowledge of the law allowed him to be confident with public officials. It seems that Paul could have saved himself and Silas a beating if he had made it known earlier that he was a Roman citizen. One of the commentators said it was because he wanted to suffer for Christ. That seems a bit of a stretch.

36 And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, The magistrates have sent to let you go: now therefore depart, and go in peace.

This jailer is happy for them and wishes them well. How surprised he must have been when they refused to leave unless the magistrates themselves came and unlocked the doors.

37 But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out.

Paul is demanding an apology. They put us in here publicly so they can take us out publicly. Paul has the upper hand since they were beaten and, imprisoned, illegally and too many people know it.

38 And the serjeants told these words unto the magistrates: and they feared, when they heard that they were Romans.

Bear in mind that it was illegal to beat a Roman citizen without a trial. Paul was in a position to get these magistrates in serious trouble.

39 And they came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city.

Paul and Silas request is accommodated, and Paul and Silas get their apology, but the magistrates do ask them to leave the city.

40 And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.

They make one more stop at Lydia's house to encourage the brethren and then

they move on.

ACTS CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

1 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews:

The indication seems to be that they passed through two smaller cities without stopping for very long. The mention of a synagogue at Thessalonica may indicate that there was no synagogue in either of the smaller cities and that may be why they did not stay in those cities. Paul had a great burden for his fellow Jews so always went to the synagogue first.

2 And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures,

The response must have been good for the apostles to spend several weeks at Thessalonica. We know from other scriptures that they were there for more than three weeks.

3 Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.

Paul opened the Old Testament scriptures and preached Jesus. Notice in this verse there are the things needed for salvation.

4 And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.

Obviously ,from these verses,the appeal of the gospel was widespread and included people from all walks of life. The term “chief women” would have been women who were in business, or whose husbands were the city leaders.

5 But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.

The bottom line is, the Jewish leaders were jealous. They gathered some very bad men from the market-place. The leaders formed them into a big, noisy crowd and that crowd managed to upset everyone in the city. The leaders wanted to drag Paul and Silas out of the house and give them to the crowd.

6 And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also;

Wouldn't you like to have it said that you had turned the world upside down for Christ? These Jews no doubt, have heard of the way Paul's message had spread in other cities in the area. The last thing these Jews wanted was a lot of Christian converts spreading the word in their city.

7 Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus.

The apostles were preaching of the millennial kingdom and not preaching against the current king. Preaching against Caesar would have been high treason. Jesus is never in competition with any earthly king until all the prophecies are fulfilled and He returns to rule.

8 And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things.

These officials were more sensible than the officials in Philippi. There was little proof of a crime and Paul and Silas were not even there to answer questions. The believers had to pay money before Paul and Silas could go free. The believers were now responsible for the actions of Paul and Silas. I think we can safely assume that this is why the missionaries left town.

9 And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the other, they let them go.

In other words, they were allowed to post bond to be forfeited if there was further disturbance in the city. In the meantime, Paul and Silas slipped away in the night..

10 And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews.

The missionaries spent quite some time in Berea where they found the people receptive to the gospel. Here again they taught in the synagogue and most of their listeners were probably Jews.

11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

The Bereans did not blindly follow the teachings of Paul but searched the scriptures to make sure they were getting the truth. This is a problem that is very prevalent today in that Christians tend to not check things for themselves but follow blindly whatever they are told.

12 Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.

Many people were saved here, both Jews and Gentiles. I had to chuckle when I saw “honorable” women. Did no dishonorable women get saved in this town? That brings to mind Mary Magdalene who was certainly a dishonorable woman until she met the Lord Jesus Christ. Then she was close to Him and the first to see Him after His resurrection.

13 But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people.

This is really some group of busybodies. They go to all the way to another city just to stir up trouble for the missionaries.

14 And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea: but Silas and Timotheus abode there still.

This may be an attempt to save the ministry by sending away Paul, the chief speaker, and keeping Silas and Timothy. Paul was probably the agitators main target. By sending Paul to Athens, some 300 miles away, they can shift attention away from the young church.

15 And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens: and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timotheus for to come to him with all speed, they departed.

16 Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.

Paul may not have intended to start a work in Athens but the circumstances he found there caused the Holy Spirit to stir him up to the point of witnessing to these idol worshipers. It was true then and it is true now, that most of the opposition to the Christian message comes from academia. Educated professionals are too smart to fall for these fairy tales. One has to wonder why they are so much against the gospel if they don't believe it.

17 Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him.

Following along with the thought in verse sixteen about the trouble with our colleges today are the Christian schools of higher learning. It is from these that we get the bible changers. For many of these the King James Bible is not the final authority. By changing the word they become their own final authority. I wonder how those, of them, who are saved will feel when they stand before our Lord at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

18 Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks,

encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.

The Epicurians believed the highest goal of man is to seek happiness. They worship education and intellect. The Stoics believed that freedom was achieved by detaching oneself from the real world and mastering one's emotions. Neither of these groups make good candidates for conversion to Christ.

19 And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is?

Areopagus is another word for Mars Hill. This is where court was held.

20 For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean.

Solomon said," there is nothing new under the sun". Others have said that every plot in every book of fiction, can be found in the Bible. In other words, there are really no new things to hear.

21 (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.)

These people weren't really interested in hearing the truth. They just enjoyed talking about things they had not heard before.

22 Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.

In most of the new bibles the word superstitious is changed to religious. That is an example of "updated" language. The words do not have the same meaning.

23 For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, To The Unknown God. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.

Paul takes a novel approach here. He uses their own altar to an unknown god to witness about the Lord Jesus Christ. When he is through, their unknown god has a name.

24 God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;

This unknown god is the God who made the world and everything in it. He is the Lord over heaven and earth. He does not live in temples that people build.

25 Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any

thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;

Have you ever wondered why no one has seen God the Father? First, it is because He is Spirit but He could take on any form He chose. If He did that the first thing we would do would be to make an image and worship it. I believe this is why the Archangel contended with Satan for the body of Moses. If we had the body, or even his tomb, we would worship it.

26 And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;

Notice the last part of that verse. From that it would seem that the races have boundaries. God was not playing around when He confounded the languages at Babel and sent mankind off in different directions.

27 That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us:

Indeed He is not far from us. Psalm 139:7-10 says this; {139:7} **Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? {139:8} If I ascend up into heaven, thou [art] there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou [art] there.] {139:9} [If] I take the wings of the morning, [and] dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; {139:10} Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.** Be sure not to miss that part of verse 8 which says He is also in Hell. That gives the lie to these modern preachers who refuse to say a person is going to Hell and instead call it separation from God. Hell is a place of fire and eternal torment and we should say so.

28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.

In the sense that God started the human race, we are all His offspring. In another sense the lost are called the children of the devil.

29 Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.

The Bible word for the Trinity is Godhead. This appears three times in scripture.

30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:

God had tolerated idolatry but now has given further revelation and is demanding that it stop. We still have forms of idolatry in this country today. Now the idols aren't graven images but anything that is put ahead of God. Be sure to notice that last part of the verse. That is clear proof that the opportunity for

salvation is open to all. Just that small passage kicks out predestination.

31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

The resurrection of Christ guarantees that all men will be resurrected to stand before Christ at some point. This will be at the judgment Seat of Christ for believers and again at the Great White Throne Judgment for the lost and for believers saved during ages following the Church Age. So, the mistake is often made that only the lost will be judged at the Great White Throne Judgment but those saved during the later ages have to be judged too.

32 And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter.

Some mocked but some believed. God has promised that His word will not return to Him void. So if some mock and throw away the tract you give them God can, and will still use it. Some of these people had a hard time believing in the resurrection but without the resurrection there would be no salvation.

33 So Paul departed from among them.

There is no evidence that a church was started, in Athens, as a result of Paul's visit. Notice that Paul has not finished his sermon before the crowd broke up.

34 Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

Dionysius was a member of the high court of Athens so his conversion would have led to others in high places being exposed to the gospel.

ACTS CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

1 After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth;

Corinth was known, far and wide, for its immorality and wickedness. The temple of Aphrodite was located here and employed hundreds of priestesses who were nothing more than prostitutes.

2 And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them.

Aquila and Priscilla became a great help to Paul and to all the Gentile churches.

It was said later, by Paul, that they even laid down their lives for him. Now the Bible doesn't say that they actually died for him but this probably refers to them getting in constant trouble because of their association to Paul.

3 And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers.

Paul worked to provide his own living. He made it a point not to take from the churches he helped to start. He did this so that none could say he was doing it for money. This is a personal thing with Paul and not something required by God. In fact, God says that those who preach the gospel are to live by the gospel. Redneck version, pay your preacher and missionaries.

4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.

Notice that now the emphasis has shifted a little. Paul still uses the synagogue but his place there has shifted to the outer court where there were more Gentiles.

5 And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ.

"Pressed in the spirit" is an interesting term. I believe he is being pushed, by the Holy Spirit, more in the direction of the Gentiles but is still resisting. Do not get the idea that Paul always did what the Holy Spirit wished him to do. He went in a different direction several times and always paid a heavy price.

6 And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean; from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.

Paul's first stop in any new town had been the synagogue. This is because, by his own admission, he had a great burden for his brethren according to the flesh. In spite of God calling him to the Gentiles he still went to the Jew first. Now he is fed up with his brother Jews. A band of Jews had followed him from town to town interfering with his ministry and now he has had enough. From this point his primary ministry is to the Gentiles.

7 And he departed thence, and entered into a certain man's house, named Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue.

Paul doesn't have to go far to find a place to preach. Next door is the house of a believer where he can teach. I picture this as preaching in the synagogue on the Sabbath, when many were gathered there, and teaching all week at the house of

Justus. Truth be told, the preaching and teaching were probably about the same in the early churches.

8 And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.

This has to be encouraging. The chief ruler of the synagogue, and his household, get saved. This is odd in that some of the commentators say you can not tell whether only Crispus and company were saved and the others heard and believed he was saved or whether many of the Corinthians were also saved and baptized. I don't have that problem. A semi colon after the word house means a full stop, with another thought following. It is that Crispus and his household were saved and this caused other Corinthians to believe, be saved and get baptized.

9 Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace:

10 For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.

God says He has many people in this city. Where did they come from? We were just told in verse eight that many believed after Crispus and his house were saved. In addition to those, others may have come in from the cities where Paul had established churches.

11 And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

Imagine what you could learn from Paul in eighteen months. You still can. We have the Pauline Epistles.

12 And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat,

Now we get a little uprising against Paul. This is probably some of the same Jews who have been making trouble before. They haul him into court and accuse him of trying to start a new religion.

13 Saying, This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law.

14 And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you:

Paul did not even have to speak in his own defense.

15 But if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters.

This Gallio is reported to be a very fair judge. He is a brother of the philosopher Seneca. No doubt he recognizes this attempt by the Jews for what it is. He is obviously fed up with them since the bible says he drove them from the court.

16 And he drave them from the judgment seat.

17 Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none of those things.

Notice that this is a different person who is now ruler of the synagogue. Crispus, the former ruler was saved and that was probably enough to make him lose his position as chief. Now this Sosthenes gets beaten to a pulp by the Greeks and though this is in plain sight of the Court, nobody cares.

18 And Paul after this tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn his head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow.

This is Paul that had shaved his head. This implies he was a Nazarite, (that's not a Nazarene). We are not told what the vow was nor why he did it. Whatever the reason, it seems to have made a good impression on the people at Ephesus.

19 And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews.

20 When they desired him to tarry longer time with them, he consented not;

Paul is anxious to get to the feast in Jerusalem. It would appear that the feast referred to means either the Passover or Pentecost, but it is impossible to determine which.

21 But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus.

There is a very important statement buried in verse 21. "If God wills" is a statement more Christians should use. We do not know what tomorrow brings, but God does.

22 And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up, and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch.

The church Paul saluted is probably the mother church at Jerusalem. With this

he concludes his second missionary journey.

23 And after he had spent some time there, he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.

Not much attention is given to Paul's visit to Jerusalem and Antioch. The focus is squarely on Ephesus where Paul had a positive response after his second trip. He has left Aquila and Priscilla at Ephesus while he goes to Jerusalem and is returning there after reporting in. He spends most of his third journey at Ephesus. I believe Paul is just plain tired.

24 And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus.

Apollos is a Jewish believer who knows the scriptures and has heard about Jesus. He still needs instruction in doctrine. He has come to a good place since Aquila and Priscilla are there.

25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John.

There is a problem since the baptism of John will no longer get a person saved. At this point he has only the Old Testament.

26 And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.

They took Apollos aside and instructed him privately. There are a lot of things to fill in between the baptism of John and Paul's gospel. Apollos had heard of Jesus but had none of the details. This is an important step because Apollos went on to become a strong force in the early church.

27 And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace:

This must be the first church letter. Apollos has now been saved and is on his own missionary journey. He is effective since he is a very good speaker, and one who is comfortable before a crowd.

28 For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.

He is preaching the same way Paul does. Using the old Testament scriptures to show Christ.

ACTS CHAPTER NINETEEN

1 And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples,

Keep in mind as we go through these first few verses that the church is still in a transition period, from law to grace. Now when we are saved we get the Holy Spirit instantly. There is no second indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

2 He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.

These people are believers but do not have the Holy Spirit. Some say these were not yet saved but they are called disciples and since believing is the key, I believed they were saved. Now, in our age, if you do not have the Holy Spirit you are not saved. Furthermore, if these were not saved then no one was saved during the period of John's preaching.

3 And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.

John's baptism was for repentance and pointed to Jesus as the one who would come after him. Now the baptism is different. Paul baptizes in the name of Jesus. We now baptize in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

4 Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.

John's baptism looked for Christ to come. Now we have a different baptism after Jesus' death, burial and resurrection.

5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Now we baptize in the name of the Father, The Son, and the Holy Spirit.

6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

These tongues were for a sign to the Jews that were present. This is always the case since "tongues" are a sign and the Jews require a sign. Notice also the "laying on of hands" to give these people the Holy Spirit. This is another thing

that has changed. Now it is automatic. This is the last time in scripture that the laying on of hands is used to convey the Holy Ghost.

7 And all the men were about twelve.

Exactly twelve, the same as the number of apostles. Twelve is a number often found in scripture and is associated with Israel. For instance, there are twelve tribes of Israel. There are twelve stars on the woman in Rev. 12 representing the twelve tribes. There are twelve gates for the tribes and twelve foundations for the apostles and twelve manner of fruits for the tribes. What about the inspiration of the King James Bible? There are twelve chapters in Daniel relating to the salvation of Israel in the Tribulation. In Genesis chapter twelve we meet the first Jew. In Exodus twelve we have the beginning of the Jewish nation. Those things did not get in that order by accident.

8 And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.

Paul had to leave the synagogue. He found somewhere else to preach. We do not know anything about Tyrannus. Perhaps he owned the building where the school was. Paul continued to make tents (see Acts 20:34). He probably did this work in the early morning then preached and taught for the rest of the day.. Paul and the other Christians had so much energy and this energy came from God. God always gives us enough energy to do things He wants us to do.

9 But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.

So, Paul spends three months preaching in the synagogue then moves to the house of Tyrannus and continues for the next two years. This is the longest period of time that Paul spends anywhere.

10 And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

This is the area we call today Asia Minor. The gospel has now spread through the entire region. This is significant because this is the area where the “seven churches” of Revelation are located.

11 And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul:

These miracles are special because no everything Paul touched, or handled, had healing power. This reminds us of Peter where they lay in the streets hoping his shadow would touch, and heal. Now, understand, that in both cases it was their

faith that did the healing.

12 So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.

This is done so that even those absent and who had never seen Paul, might be healed and further the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ. Such extraordinary works were also wrought by God to magnify the words preached by both Paul and Peter. Notice that diseases and evil spirits are mentioned separately. This clearly shows that "diseases" and "evil spirits" are not the same, as is sometimes taught.

13 Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth.

These "vagabond" Jews were not the same group that followed Paul from town to town to cause trouble. The scripture tells us what these people were when it mentions exorcism. They were magicians and entertainers. This is an odd profession for Jews since they are forbidden by God, to dabble in magic. The following is the biblical account of Israel's king Manasseh **2 Chronicles ch 33 vs 6 And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom; also he observed times, (that's horoscopes), and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger.** And yes this does include Harry Potter because it teaches our children that these things are just harmless fun.

14 And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so.

Sceva was one of the chief priests. Why his sons would try this is anybody's guess. So now we have seven of these so called magicians who are going to attempt an exorcism like they had seen Paul do.

15 And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?

Notice back in verse thirteen the wording these men use. Obviously they were unsaved since they did not know Jesus. Here is another example of God's sense of humor.

16 And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

Notice here that an evil spirit can cause a person to have superhuman strength. This man, under the influence of the demonic spirit, severely beat seven grown men.

17 And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.

That phrase, "Fear fell on them all" shows that they realize that God will not hold anyone guiltless who profanes His name, or blasphemes or speak against it as the seven sons had done. I think the seven sons are lucky to get off with just a beating.

18 And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds.

19 Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.

Many people in Ephesus, even some of the new believers, performed magic. They had heard what had happened to Sceva's sons and repented and wanted to turn away from magic completely. To show this, they destroyed their books about magic. Imagine how expensive books would have been in this day when everything had to be copied with a quill pen and ink. The books cost a lot of money but that did not matter. They wanted to obey God.

20 So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.

Two things were magnified. Both the Lord Jesus Christ and the Word of God. These people had had a real revival.

21 After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome.

Paul had established a strong church in Ephesus and now it was time to move on. The word 'decided' here means 'he made plans in the Spirit'. God was guiding Paul and telling him he must go to Rome but this is one of those times Paul did not do exactly as the Holy Spirit wished. The Spirit said go to Rome but Paul wanted to go to Spain and then to Rome. He went to Rome but he went as a prisoner.

But first, he wanted to encourage the Christians in Macedonia and Athens. He also wanted to collect money from these Christians. This money was to help the poor Christians in Jerusalem. They were poor because they had been persecuted and unable to work. Also, there had been a famine.

22 So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus; but he himself stayed in Asia for a season.

Paul sent Timothy and Erastus ahead of him to Macedonia. This was probably to help to collect the money for the Jerusalem Christians. Paul did not stay in the city of Ephesus but traveled around the nearby area. We know this from Luke's wording where he writes, "the province of Asia".

23 And the same time there arose no small stir about that way.

The reason for this is that the cities gods are being destroyed. Every time Paul and his followers turn another person to Christ the income of the craftsmen, who make the idols, goes down another notch.

24 For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen;

Demetrius probably led the union for people who made things from silver. The silver shrines mentioned are small images or models resembling the temple built at Ephesus in honor of Diana the great heathen goddess. These models were placed in houses and carried about on the person as objects of worship.

25 Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth.

Getting, or keeping, a livelihood, are great temptations. This is what is behind the superstition and false worship that abound in the world today. It, that is greed, is also the reason behind the false bibles. Money. You cannot copyright a King James Bible so there is no money to be made.

26 Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands:

This was bad for Demetrius's business. He was very angry and pretended to be upset because people might reject Diana. More likely, he was angry because he would not make money.

27 So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth.

This shows how successful the apostles had been at winning converts. Satan always follows a revival. In this case wealthy businessmen were used to stir up confusion against the cause of Christ.

28 And when they heard these sayings, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.

The temple of Diana was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It's theater seated more than 50,000 people.

29 And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre.

The mob grabs these two men, since they can't find Paul, and rush them into the theater. This theater is what we would call a stadium today. These were later used for contests between the Christians and the lions.

30 And when Paul would have entered in unto the people, the disciples suffered him not.

I believe they had to physically restrain Paul.

31 And certain of the chief of Asia, which were his friends, sent unto him, desiring him that he would not adventure himself into the theatre.

These are influential friends of Pauls' but notice that they sent word. These men knew better than to go down to where the mob was and speak to Paul in person.

32 Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused: and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together.

This is a true picture of a mob. Most of them don't even know why they are there nor what they hope to accomplish.

33 And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander beckoned with the hand, and would have made his defence unto the people.

Alexander was a Jew and not a Christian. He was put forward by the Jews of Ephesus to speak for them but by this time the mob was so inflamed they did not see any difference between Jews and Christians.

34 But when they knew that he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.

. A Jew, and by consequence an enemy to their idolatry; and, as they might imagine at least, a friend to Paul. The crowd would not let Alexander speak because he was a Jew and they knew that he did not worship Diana.

35 And when the townclerk had appeased the people, he said, Ye men of

Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter?

The town clerk is giving some wise advice here as he tries to calm the uproar.

36 Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly.

Paul, and the others, did not mock the religion of the Ephesians but only tried to enlighten them about the Lord Jesus Christ. Their method, as they went from place to place was to teach the truth. This was the same method Jesus used in His public ministry.

37 For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess.

The revisers of the new bibles have changed the word churches to temples to hide the fact that heathens have churches too. There are even churches of Satan in our local area.

38 Wherefore if Demetrius, and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies: let them implead one another.

In other words, let them sue if they think they have a case.

39 But if ye enquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly.

At this time, Gaius and Aristarchus were innocent men. If Demetrius wanted to accuse them of crimes, he must do it properly. Demetrius could accuse them in the local law courts, or he could go to the citizens' meeting. This meeting happened three times in every month, but in an assembly called by lawful authority, which the Romans did call, at least, three times every month.

40 For we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse.

Demetrius has now put himself in danger. Under Roman rule, anyone who stirred up a mob could be put to death. So now not only are Paul and the other apostles in danger but Demetrius is as well.

41 And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly.

God one way or other, kept his church and people from being ruined. In this way, the Romans are kept from coming in and declaring martial law.

ACTS CHAPTER TWENTY

1 And after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples, and embraced them, and departed for to go into Macedonia.

Paul decides to leave and give Demetrius time to cool down. Considering Paul's track record I think it is safe to say that he did not leave from fear but in order to spare the church further trouble.

2 And when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece,

We do not know how long Paul was in Macedonia. But it was probably more than a year.

3 And there abode three months. And when the Jews laid wait for him, as he was about to sail into Syria, he purposed to return through Macedonia.

Paul stayed in Greece during the winter of AD 56 to AD 57. He probably stayed in Corinth. He wrote his letter to the Romans from there. Then he prepared to sail to Syria. But he discovered a Jewish plot to kill him. This is probably the same group of Jews from chapter eighteen. So, he changes his plans and goes back through Macedonia.

4 And there accompanied him into Asia Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus.

Luke gives a list of the people who went with Paul. They came from different churches and are accompanying Paul to carry the offering to Jerusalem. Probably, this group travelled together through Macedonia, and then separated. Paul stayed in Philippi for the Passover. Luke met Paul in Philippi. We know this because the 'we' passages start again. They travelled together to Troas and this voyage lasted 5 days. The wind must have been against them since they had made the same voyage before in two days. That was in Acts 16.

6 And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days.

Days of unleavened bread is the Passover.

7 And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.

Paul and his companions stayed in Troas for a week. Here Luke wrote about

only one event but it was an important event with much to teach. They met 'on the first day of the week'. This was Sunday, so we know that the first Christians worshipped on Sunday. God raised Jesus from death sometime Saturday night since when Mary Magdalene came at dawn on Sunday morning, He had already risen. The meeting was in the evening. This was because people worked during the day. Paul had much to say to them because he was leaving the next day.

8 And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together.

In all of Paul's other recorded sermons, many were saved. In this instance, if anyone was saved it isn't mentioned. It may be worth noticing that the other recorded sermons were short and this one was especially long. This sounds like a joke but isn't intended that way. When something goes on too long people tend to lose interest and mentally drop out.

9 And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead.

It is likely that this young man had worked hard all day and was tired when he got there. Even the Holy Spirit says that Paul was long winded.

10 And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him.

Notice that each one of Paul's miracles matches one of Peter's. This is not a coincidence but is planned that way by the Holy Spirit to prove that Paul's apostleship is as great as Peter's. In this case, Paul raised one from the dead just as Peter had.

11 When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed.

It was probably early Monday morning before daybreak that Paul broke bread with them. Jews broke up bread and shared the pieces before a meal. Now you all know this was the "sop" used to dip in the gravy. Jesus did this the night before he died. Then Paul and the believers ate a meal together. After that, Paul spoke with them until he left.

12 And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted.

This guy had fallen from the third floor and died. Now here he is alive and well. If any bones were broken in that fall, then they were healed on the spot.

13 And we went before to ship, and sailed unto Assos, there intending to take in Paul: for so had he appointed, minding himself to go afoot.

Paul decided to walk to Assos. By the Roman road. It was about 20 miles from Troas so it took much more time to sail there. Perhaps Paul wanted to stay and teach a little longer.

14 And when he met with us at Assos, we took him in, and came to Mitylene.

15 And we sailed thence, and came the next day over against Chios; and the next day we arrived at Samos, and tarried at Trogyllium; and the next day we came to Miletus.

Remember that Paul left Trophimus at Miletum sick. In other words he was unable to heal him. This after raising someone from the dead. This shows that the apostolic powers were beginning to fade. God had used them to show the Jews that Paul's apostolic gifts were real. Now they were going away. This is why those who claim apostolic succession today are heretics. There is no apostolic power in our age.

16 For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.

I think we can safely assume that Paul wanted to be at the feast because of the huge number of Jews who would be there. This would give him a great opportunity to witness and preach.

17 And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.

This is odd since Paul had made it plain he did not want to go to Ephesus this trip. Instead he sends for the elders to come to him..This is a twenty five mile walk each way .My feeling is that he did not go to Ephesus because he felt they would keep him there too long and he would miss the Passover feast in Jerusalem.

18 And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons,

Paul's speech was for a Christian audience. It is the only speech in Acts like this. All Paul's other speeches were for Jewish or Gentile audiences. Luke was there and he wrote the speech down. The speech was like one of Paul's letters but was shorter.

19 Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews:

20 And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house,

Paul did not come boasting of himself but instead, had a genuine concern for the souls of all he met. He preached to crowds. He preached to people in their homes. He told the good news to Jews and to Gentiles. He never held back because of other people's opinions'. Paul was always bold. Every type of persecution you can imagine happened to Paul things happened to Paul but that did not stop him. He wanted people to receive salvation and he never changed God's message.

21 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone needs to get a clear picture of just what repentance is. Repentance is turning from the direction you are going and turning to the direction God wants you to go. Repentance is not picking out individual sins and confessing those. Repentance and confession are different things. You and I do not even know what all of our sins are until after we are saved.

22 And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there:

This means that the Holy Spirit is working on Paul's spirit to move him in the direction of Jerusalem.

23 Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.

Paul doesn't know what awaits him in Jerusalem but he knows it will not be good. The Holy Spirit has already made it known to Paul that beatings and prison are in his future.

24 But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

This implies the work that all Christians must take in their general calling. It seems to be a good place to make some comments about our calling as Christians. We sometimes misuse ,or confuse, the words preacher and pastor. I know I have done it from this very pulpit when I fill in for our pastor. There are special qualifications for a pastor but all of us are called on to preach, and teach. Notice the words preach and teach, which, in our case, are the same thing. That is what we do when we witness.

25 And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone

preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more.

26 Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men.

God chose the prophet Ezekiel to warn the Israelites that they must stop sinning or they would die. If Ezekiel did not warn them, he was responsible for their death, but if he did warn them, he was not responsible. Paul was like Ezekiel in that God had chosen him to tell people the gospel. If anyone did not obey God's message, it was their own fault. Paul had done everything that he could to spread the good news. That's the good news. The bad news is that this same thing applies to us.

27 For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

He is speaking to the elders of the church here and telling them they have all they need to tell people how to be saved and how to live a Christian life.

28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

This is an interesting verse. Paul is still talking to the elders. We no longer seem to have elders in our Baptist churches but they are certainly biblical. I guess we can safely say that the pastor is considered an elder and he would be the head elder if there were others. This verse says the Holy Ghost makes the overseers(elders). So,while the deacons are not appointed by the pastor,neither are the elders. The deacons are chosen by the congregation but the elders are not. This is probably why we don't have any. There is a passage in Titus giving the qualifications for elders and saying that the pastor ordains them. This kind of thinking can get all the way to ridiculous. For instance,one commentators' reasoning is that since the pastor is called by God,then the congregation has no say in the matter. Following that line of reasoning folks,if we ever lose our pastor we would just sit and wait until someone shows up at the door one Sunday morning and says,"Hi,I'm your new pastor. Some of this stuff can get really wild.

29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

Grievous wolves. Now we have had over two thousand years for these people to work. They are all servants of Satan and have one of three motives. Money,or pride,or some combination of the two.

30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

31 Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

Good teachers talk about the Lord Jesus Christ, not about themselves. They encourage people to obey the Book . False teachers want to be important and want power over people so they lead people away from Christ.

32 And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

There is a proper order to love. First God, then God's word, then God's people, then the lost.

33 I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel.

Remember that Paul did not take offering for himself but instead, worked as a tent maker to support himself.

34 Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.

I think we have said this before but it bears repeating. Paul worked to support himself so that no one could point at him and say he was doing what he did for money. One of the favorite things a lost person says, after they quote the, "Judge not", verse is to say preachers are just in it for the money. That may well be true of some mega churches but certainly not of most Independent Baptist churches.

35 I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

The last phrase, "**It is more blessed to give than to receive**" should have special meaning to Christians. Proverbs 19:17 **He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.**

Redneck version, you can not out give God so long as you give properly. So what does give properly mean? There are a few rules. First, the tithe is not a gift. It is owed to God and payed through the church you attend regularly. You find that in Malachi Ch 3 vs 8-12. Second, you are not to give to an able bodied man who will not work. You are to literally let him starve to death if he is too lazy to work. You find that in 2 Thess. ch 3:vs 10. Next, if you have extra you are to help the Christian widows and orphans. You find that in James ch 1:vs 27. Then, if you have more to give it should go to Christians in need. If you still have more you can give to the lost who are in need. Finally, Hezekiah ch: 13 vs 13 says Thou shalt never send money to a TV con artist posing as a preacher.

36 And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all.

Here is a little oddity. See that little squiggly mark just before verse thirty six? That is the last paragraph mark in the bible.

37 And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him,

38 Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship.

You can see from these last two verses that the people really loved Paul and Paul loved them. I think the phrase, "that they should see his face no more", is what did it. He is leaving and they all know that he will never be back.

ACTS CHAPTER TWENTY ONE

1 And it came to pass, that after we were gotten from them, and had launched, we came with a straight course unto Coos, and the day following unto Rhodes, and from thence unto Patara:

On Rhodes was built one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. This was a brass statue, of Apollo, which was 106 feet tall. Ships could sail between its legs. In 224 BC an earthquake toppled it and the brass was later sold. It is said that it took 900 camels to carry it away.

2 And finding a ship sailing over unto Phenicia, we went aboard, and set forth.

3 Now when we had discovered Cyprus, we left it on the left hand, and sailed into Syria, and landed at Tyre: for there the ship was to unlade her burden.

"Discovered Cyprus" just means they saw it from the ship. Whatever the ship was carrying, it was unloaded at Tyre.

4 And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.

God warned Paul four times not to go up to Jerusalem but Paul disobeyed because of his burden for his people. Notice that God allowed Paul his own choice in the matter.

5 And when we had accomplished those days, we departed and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we

were out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed.

These people were hungry for the word. In just seven days Paul had converted most of these. They had become so fond of Paul and his message that the whole crowd followed him to the seashore to see him off.

6 And when we had taken our leave one of another, we took ship; and they returned home again.

7 And when we had finished our course from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, and saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day.

This was the ship's next stop and Paul, and company, were able to connect with another body of believers. Churches like this had probably sprung up when the Jews were persecuted and driven out of Jerusalem twenty five years earlier.

8 And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him.

This is the same Phillip who was the deacon in Acts 6:vs 5.

9 And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.

These four young women were preaching as soul winners. They were witnessing. Women do prophesy according to 1 Cor:11:5 and 14:34-40. The word "prophetess" can be found in Luke 2:36 and it is also applied to Miriam and Deborah in the Old Testament. These virgin daughters are prophesying in their fathers house and not in the assembly. By the way, there are many instances of women prophesying in both the Old and New Testament. It is worth noting that these four did not prophesy to Paul. That was done by Agabus.

10 And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus.

Paul had already been warned not to go to Jerusalem but this warning was even stronger with the added binding with the girdle. This worries the believers more than it does Paul.

11 And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.

The phrase, "thus sayeth the Holy Ghost", matches the Old Testament, "thus sayeth the Lord God". Since these match it shows beyond doubt that the Holy Ghost is the third person of the Trinity and is equal with Jehovah.

12 And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.

Paul is determined to go even if it means prison ,or beheading. Paul knows it,the disciples know it and God knows it. This is an example of the permissive will of God. He could have stopped Paul.

13 Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.

There is a reason why Paul is so determined to go to Jerusalem. Remember that he is carrying the Gentiles offering for the needy Jews at the Jerusalem Church. This,and his desire to preach to the Jews there was reason enough,in his mind,to ignore the warnings not to go.

14 And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.

God knew Paul's heart and even in the middle of disobedience his heart was in the right place as far as God was concerned. God wanted Paul out in the boondocks witnessing to Jews and Gentiles but Paul was determined to witness in Jerusalem.

15 And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem.

So they gave up,picked up their backpacks and headed for Jerusalem.

16 There went with us also certain of the disciples of Caesarea, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge.

Apparently Mnason is a Jew so one reason for his going along is so that there will be at least one Jew in the company when they get to Jerusalem. The others,and there were at least seven, and they were all Gentiles. That said,some of the Caesarean disciples may have been Jewish as well.

17 And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.

The commandant, suspects Paul of some great crime and expects to get a confession by torture but Paul obtains exemption as a Roman citizen. So, he is brought before the Sanhedrin , where a contention arises, and he is a third time rescued from violence by the Roman soldiers. Next there is to be an assassination attempt; but the plot is discovered, and he is sent safely to Felix, the governor. Do keep in mind that Paul has been warned several times not to go to Jerusalem. These things are the fruit of that disobedience.

18 And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present.

This would be James, the Lord's half brother. It has been said before but bears repeating that Jesus had at least six younger half brothers and sisters.

19 And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry.

Paul's news encourages the Jerusalem church. No doubt the offering helped too.

20 And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law:

The Jerusalem elders have some good news of their own. There are thousands of new converts, all still keeping the law.

21 And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs.

Now watch this. These elders, of the church at Jerusalem, are still confused about the law thirty years after Calvary. Obviously they are still keeping the law or there would be no question of whether the Gentiles should keep the law. The moral law is still in effect but the ceremonial law was amended at Calvary. You might still keep the dietary laws for health's sake but these do not affect salvation nor spirituality.

22 What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come.

These things that Paul is about to do do not violate his conscience. This is strictly for the purpose of convincing the believing Jews that he isn't trying to violate their customs.

23 Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them;

Paul persuaded the leaders that he was not against Jewish customs, but he had to convince the other believers. So, the leaders asked him to follow a Jewish custom in public. They asked him to help four men. These men had made special promises to God. These promises were called Nazarite promises. People made Nazarite promises to thank God when he had helped them in a special way.

24 Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law.

This looks a lot like Paul is going along to get along here. Nevertheless, Paul agrees to join the four in their vow and not only that but he pays for all the offerings. Each man will bring two lambs, one ram, a meat offering, a grain offering, a drink offering and a basket of unleavened wafers. That's Numbers 6 if you are taking notes. After each man's offering is presented to God, the man will shave his head and burn the hair in the fire of the fellowship offering.

25 As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication.

The leaders did not want to make Gentiles obey the law. They reminded Paul about the letter that they had written. see Acts 15:19-21, 23-29. Paul did what the leaders wanted and he did it the next day to show the Jewish Christians that he followed Jewish customs too.

26 Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them.

This purification was necessary because Paul had been eating with Gentiles. This whole thing is for the benefit of the other Jews and not of any benefit to Paul. This does show the Jews that Paul is not trying to do away with Jewish traditions. Even the Christian Jews can't seem to get past their low opinion of the Gentiles.

27 And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him,

Notice the word "almost". Paul did not get to finish his purification.

28 Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place.

The Jews from Asia probably came from Ephesus. We think this because they recognised both Paul and Trophimus. It was Pentecost, so, there were many Jews from different countries in the Temple. The Jews from Asia accused Paul of two crimes. They said that he taught against the two most important things in

Judaism, the Law and the Temple. Remember Stephen? False witnesses said that Stephen had spoken against the Law and the Temple (Acts 6:13). They also said that Paul had brought Gentiles into the inner part of the Temple. This was not true but a mob isn't interested in truth.. They said it because they had seen Paul with Trophimus, a Gentile, in the city. So, they thought that he had come with Paul during his purification. Gentiles had to stay in the outer parts of the Temple. A fence separated the inner from the outer parts and if a Gentile passed the fence they would die. The Roman rulers allowed the men in the Sanhedrin to kill anyone who did this.

29 (For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.)

30 And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut.

They dragged Paul from the inner part of the Temple since they were not allowed to kill him there. Luke records that the gates closed. This was so that Paul could not run back inside and his death make the inner part of the Temple unclean.

31 And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar.

These people intended to beat Paul to death. When the Holy Spirit says don't go it would be wise not to disobey.

32 Who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them: and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul.

The chief captain brought enough soldiers to handle the crowd.

33 Then the chief captain came near, and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and demanded who he was, and what he had done.

This chief captain, we learn later, is Claudius Lysias. He first arrests Paul then places him in sort of a protective custody. The mob is still trying to get to Paul so the soldiers carry him into the barracks.

34 And some cried one thing, some another, among the multitude: and when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the castle.

He ordered his men to put a chain on each of Paul's arms. Then he ordered them to tie Paul to two soldiers. The leader wanted to discover what Paul had

done. Roman law did not allow people to kill someone without a trial. There was a lot of noise and confusion. The leader could not decide what Paul had done, so, he ordered his soldiers to take Paul into the building. They had to carry him because the crowd were trying to seize him. They still wanted to kill him.

35 And when he came upon the stairs, so it was, that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the people.

36 For the multitude of the people followed after, crying, Away with him.

The people are still trying to get him away from the soldiers so they can kill him.

37 And as Paul was to be led into the castle, he said unto the chief captain, May I speak unto thee? Who said, Canst thou speak Greek?

The captain assumed he was arresting a Jew, so he expected Paul to speak in Hebrew or Aramaic. The Greek indicated an educated person

38 Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers?

Some say this Egyptian was Barabbas. The captain seems to think this Egyptian has come back to town to start more trouble.

39 But Paul said, I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and, I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people.

Immediately, Paul told the captain who he was. The captain allowed Paul to speak to the crowd. Probably, he wanted to discover what Paul had done. Paul waved his hand. Then he spoke in Hebrew. He wanted them to understand that he too was a Jew. He was not their enemy. He was one of them.

40 And when he had given him licence, Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew tongue, saying,

Surprisingly, the crowd grows silent when Paul begins to speak in Hebrew. This is the same bunch that were beating him, to death, just minutes ago.

ACTS CHAPTER TWENTY TWO

1 Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence which I make now unto you.

These are the same words that Stephen spoke just before he was stoned to death. Paul

heard these words because he was standing right there, consenting to his death. This must have been running through Paul's mind as he was making this defense.

2 (And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith,)

Everyone grew quiet. This is supernatural considering they were ready to kill him just minutes before. It may have quieted them to hear Paul speaking in their mother tongue, especially since they were so prejudiced against all other nations and languages.

3 I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day.

The crowd's complaint was that Paul wasn't Jewish enough so he gives them his history. Gamaliel was a leading Rabbi so being taught by him was a big plus as far as the Jews were concerned.

4 And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.

Notice the phrase, "persecuted unto death". No matter what you may have done in life, some of God's best men have done worse. Here we have Paul killing Christians as well as some examples in the Old Testament. David, for instance, had a man killed so he could have his wife yet God said later, he, (David), was a man after His own heart. The point being, God put all this in here to show that He would forgive you if you ask.

5 As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished.

At the beginning Paul had been as zealous as anyone in persecuting Christians. The crowd was probably warming up to him by this point.

6 And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me.

Other than the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, this, the salvation of Saul, is probably the most important biblical event for the modern Christian. With his preaching, the gospel of the kingdom has changed to the gospel of the grace of God and that is what the church lives by.

7 And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

Imagine what must be going through Paul's mind about this time. He has to be in sheer

terror.

8 And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.

Paul did not decide to become a Christian by himself. He changed because of something that God did and said. He was now blind, so his companions led him to Damascus.

9 And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.

He said that he saw the light at noon so, that light was brighter than the sun!

10 And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.

There is no argument here and no excuses made for his prior conduct. “What shall I do Lord” shows him now yielded completely to the Lord.

11 And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus.

Notice that they all saw the light but Paul was the only one blinded by the light. The rest could see well enough since they led him into the city.

12 And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there,

Look at Paul's description of Ananias, “a devout man according to the law”. We know from chapter nine that Ananias had a fear of Paul because of his reputation. Nevertheless, he did as he was told by God.

13 Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him.

Ananias confirms that Paul is to be a witness to all men. That word “all” would include the Gentiles.

14 And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.

This had to be a shocker. Paul is being told that he will actually see, and hear Jesus in person in addition to having met him on the Damascus road.

15 For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.

The next verse seems to teach salvation by baptism but remember that Paul was already saved and filled with the Holy Ghost so this baptism could not be for the remission of

sins. This is a reflection of the belief of Ananias.

16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

The Cambellites love this verse since it says “be baptized and wash away your sins”. Keep in mind that we are in a transition period from law to grace in the book of Acts. You could pair this up with 2:38 and make a good case for salvation by baptism if these two verses were all you had. Fortunately we have the letters to the churches to go by.

17 And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance;

According to Galatians 1:18 this occurred over three years later. Picking it up at verse 17, it says; **Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. {1:18} Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.** So unless we have the Galatians passage the timeline can get confusing. Paul has already spent some of this time with the Lord in Arabia, or more likely, in Heaven.

18 And saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me.

This is the Lord speaking to Paul and warning him to get out of Jerusalem. Notice that back in verse 17 Paul still went to the Temple to pray. He was a devout Jew even though he was now a saved Christian.

19 And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee:

Paul is still talking to the Lord here. It is also obvious from verse 18 that God is speaking audibly to Paul.

20 And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.

21 And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.

God did indeed send him far away to the Gentiles. He went all over the Roman empire carrying the gospel.

22 And they gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live.

This is almost funny. Notice that they have been very attentive to Paul until he says the word Gentile. Now they are again ready to kill him. One word takes precedence over the truth, and send them into a frenzy.

23 And as they cried out, and cast off their clothes, and threw dust into the air,

These people have worked themselves into a frenzy. People are now doing to Paul what he did to others before he was saved on the Damascus road.

24 The chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, and bade that he should be examined by scourging; that he might know wherefore they cried so against him.

The captain saw the outrage going on and still wanted to know what Paul had done to get them so worked up. It was the fact that Paul taught that the Gentile was now equal to the Jew that had them so upset. At this point the captain intended to have Paul tortured to find out the truth.

25 And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?

Paul knew the law and used it to his advantage. There is a lesson here for us. We should know the laws of our land. This will be even more important as we get closer to the end. Things will only get tougher for Christians as we get closer to the Rapture.

26 When the centurion heard that, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest: for this man is a Roman.

Paul was born in Tarsus and Tarsus was a Roman city. Paul was either born a Roman citizen or his father had performed some service for Rome.

27 Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea.

28 And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was free born.

This shows that Roman citizenship could be bought. The captain may have been a slave until his freedom was purchased.

29 Then straightway they departed from him which should have examined him: and the chief captain also was afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.

This was serious business. The soldiers could have been punished, even put to death, for whipping Paul. Even for tying him up they could have been in trouble.

30 On the morrow, because he would have known the certainty wherefore he was accused of the Jews, he loosed him from his bands, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down, and set him before them.

Paul spent the night in chains but the next morning the chains were removed. He ordered the chief priests and all the Sanhedrin to meet together. Then he brought Paul in. He made Paul stand in front of them.

ACTS CHAPTER TWENTY THREE

1 And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.

Paul called the men in the Sanhedrin his 'brothers and obviously did not mean Christian brethren. He meant brothers as the Jews were brothers. This also put Paul on an equal footing with this group.

2 And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth.

Notice that the high priest can not be bothered to strike Paul himself. He instructs another to do the deed.

3 Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?

Some of the commentators say that Paul was being sarcastic and that of course he recognized the high priest. Others point out Paul's poor eyesight which may have caused him not to recognize Ananias. There is a third possibility and that is that the high priest may have changed since Paul's last visit.

4 And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest?

So, it is alright for the high priest to break the Jewish law but not alright to speak against him.

5 Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.

Since what Paul said was true I vote for sarcasm. I can't help but wonder sometimes what must have gone through the mind of a person like the high Priest one second after they passed into eternity.

6 But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.

Paul was a smart man. He deliberately mentioned the resurrection to get the people arguing among themselves.

7 And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided.

The argument between these two groups becomes so heated that the Roman captain feels he must get Paul under cover.

8 For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both.

Most of these people would have been serious Old Testament bible students. How could any student of the bible not believe in angels. There are plenty of Old Testament appearances.

9 And there arose a great cry: and the scribes that were of the Pharisees' part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God.

At least someone in the mob has some sense. Paul now had the Pharisees on his side if he had had some special revelation.

10 And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring him into the castle.

The argument is now so intense the Roman captain feels he must remove Paul for his own safety.

11 And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.

Paul had been the target of two different mobs on two consecutive days so this vision, if it was a vision, must have been especially welcome. Now he knows he will make it to Rome. I said "if it was a vision", because it seems to me to be a real appearance of the Lord.

12 And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.

I wonder if they are hungry and thirsty yet?

13 And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy.

Understand that this is murder that they are planning and no one, including the high priest, speaks against it.

14 And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul.

This is one of those places where I wish God had given us a little more information. I can't help but wonder what that great curse was that they placed themselves under considering that they did not fulfill their vow.

15 Now therefore ye with the council signify to the chief captain that he bring him down unto you to morrow, as though ye would enquire something more perfectly concerning him: and we, or ever he come near, are ready to kill him.

This does not sound like either Judaism nor Christianity. These men seem alright with lying to gain their religious ends. Some of these men are supposed to be the most holy men of Israel.

16 And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul.

Don't miss this. Paul did have some family though he did not have a wife. Now we know he had at least a sister and a nephew.

17 Then Paul called one of the centurions unto him, and said, Bring this young man unto the chief captain: for he hath a certain thing to tell him.

A couple of things stand out in this verse. First, Paul must have made a good impression on the centurion since he readily did what Paul asked. Second, he did not give the message to the centurion but sent the boy straight to the top.

18 So he took him, and brought him to the chief captain, and said, Paul the prisoner called me unto him, and prayed me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath something to say unto thee.

Paul considered the words, "Paul the prisoner", to be a badge of honor. He used the expression about himself several times in his letters to the churches.

19 Then the chief captain took him by the hand, and went with him aside privately, and asked him, What is that thou hast to tell me?

This suggests that the nephew was a young boy, probably less than thirteen years old.

20 And he said, The Jews have agreed to desire thee that thou wouldest bring down Paul to morrow into the council, as though they would enquire

somewhat of him more perfectly.

21 But do not thou yield unto them: for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men, which have bound themselves with an oath, that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him: and now are they ready, looking for a promise from thee.

The Jews would have been both the council, and those forty and upwards spoken of, back in verses 12 and 13.

22 So the chief captain then let the young man depart, and charged him, See thou tell no man that thou hast shewed these things to me.

This verse shows us two things. The captain cares enough about the young man to warn him not to mention this to anyone else or the Jews may have killed him as well. This also has the advantage, for the captain, of giving him the element of surprise.

23 And he called unto him two centurions, saying, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Caesarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night;

The strength of the escort shows that Lysias knew the desperate fanaticism of the Jews. In addition to the threat from the Jews there were always robbers to worry about.

24 And provide them beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring him safe unto Felix the governor.

It is good to keep in mind that none of these Romans had any good will toward Paul. This strong guard is an example of God providing what is needed to get Paul safely on his way.

25 And he wrote a letter after this manner:

26 Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix sendeth greeting.

Claudius expresses the opinion that Paul is not guilty of any serious crime. There is just some question of Jewish law. Claudius seems to regard the actions of the Jews as childish except for their threat to kill Paul.

27 This man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed of them: then came I with an army, and rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman.

Notice here that Claudius did not know Paul was a Roman until he brought him inside the castle. This is just Claudius covering his backside. He didn't want

Felix to know what he had done to Paul.

28 And when I would have known the cause wherefore they accused him, I brought him forth into their council:

The attitude of the captain seems to be, "who cares if he preaches the overthrow of Moses?", he is a Roman.

29 Whom I perceived to be accused of questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds.

This was helpful to Paul who would need all the help he could get as he faced his Jewish accusers.

30 And when it was told me how that the Jews laid wait for the man, I sent straightway to thee, and gave commandment to his accusers also to say before thee what they had against him. Farewell.

Claudius is passing the buck to Felix and isn't above a little flattery. He can't seem to get away fast enough.

31 Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul, and brought him by night to Antipatris.

This must have been a hard trip even for hardened Roman soldiers. They covered about thirty five miles that first day.

32 On the morrow they left the horsemen to go with him, and returned to the castle:

This next day most of the threat was gone so the foot soldiers were allowed to return to the castle.

33 Who, when they came to Caesarea and delivered the epistle to the governor, presented Paul also before him.

The journey takes place without incident and both Paul, and the letter, are delivered to Felix.

34 And when the governor had read the letter, he asked of what province he was. And when he understood that he was of Cilicia;

Felix is acting wisely in waiting to hear Paul until his accusers come. Hearing one side at a time allows too much altering of the facts.

35 I will hear thee, said he, when thine accusers are also come. And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's judgment hall.

Apparently Paul has an easy time of it while he waits for his accusers to come.

After this he will be in prison.

ACTS CHAPTER TWENTY FOUR

1 And after five days Ananias the high priest descended with the elders, and with a certain orator named Tertullus, who informed the governor against Paul.

Ananias and the other leaders went to Caesarea quickly. When they arrived, they met Felix in the court. Now Paul's trial could begin.

2 And when he was called forth, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying, Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence,

Tertullus was a lawyer and great public speaker. He bootlicked Felix and painted Paul as an enemy of the state.

3 We accept it always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness.

While Felix was a very wicked ruler and had killed many Jews, he had managed to bring peace to the region by stopping the robber bands and stopping the friction between the Jews and Syrians.

4 Notwithstanding, that I be not further tedious unto thee, I pray thee that thou wouldest hear us of thy clemency a few words.

Since Ananias was the chief accuser of Paul I found it interesting that some time later he was assassinated by his son, Jonathan who then became high priest, and was later assassinated by Felix.

5 For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes:

This is almost funny now but would not have been amusing at the time. Paul is accused of sedition, being a ringleader of heresy and a defiler of the Jewish temple. This is also the only time in the New Testament that Christians are called Nazarenes. There is nothing wrong with the term but there is no precedence for the church calling themselves Nazarenes.

6 Who also hath gone about to profane the temple: whom we took, and would have judged according to our law.

Of course no mention is made of the fact that they intended to kill him.

7 But the chief captain Lysias came upon us, and with great violence took him away out of our hands,

Most of the new "corrupt" bibles have taken this verse out .

8 Commanding his accusers to come unto thee: by examining of whom thyself mayest take knowledge of all these things, whereof we accuse him.

The word is in the singular, and refers to Paul. Tertullus rests his case on the examination of the prisoner himself saying, 'He cannot deny these statements.'

9 And the Jews also assented, saying that these things were so.

Here are the lying false witnesses.

10 Then Paul, after that the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, answered, Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself:

Paul did not give up his right to speak by using a lawyer. He spoke honestly and truthfully. We should always object verbally to all injustices.

11 Because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship.

Paul gives the timeline. Paul meets the elders (first day); joins them; on the fifth day after this he is seized ; he appears before the Sanhedrin ; is sent to Caesarea ; and makes this defense on the fifth day after he had left Jerusalem . What he is saying, in effect, is that he hasn't had time to do the things he is accused of.

12 And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city:

Paul emphasizes that he is not a troublemaker and has never tried to instigate an insurrection. He had gone to Jerusalem as a pilgrim and not as an agitator.

13 Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me.

Paul stresses the similarities between his beliefs and their beliefs. They have the same forefathers and worship the same God. They believe the same scriptures and have the same hope of the resurrection of the dead.

14 But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets:

The corrupt new bibles have changed the word "heresy" to sect to portray Christianity as a cult. The Pharisees accused Paul of being a radical troublemaker but Paul simply believed all the words of scripture. Notice also that this is the first mention of the word heresy and sets the meaning for the next two thousand years.

15 And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall

be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.

Paul differed from the Pharisees here in that they held to a resurrection only of the just and not the unjust. We know the difference because without the resurrection of the unjust there could be no judgment of them.

16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void to offence toward God, and toward men.

Paul's major concern was not to offend God. One of the main ways to offend God is to criticize and doubt His word.

17 Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings.

18 Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude, nor with tumult.

Paul insists that he has done nothing to defile the temple. In fact, it was not until the Jews from Asia showed up that a riot started.

19 Who ought to have been here before thee, and object, if they had ought against me.

The Jews of Asia, having seen Trophimus with Paul in the streets of Jerusalem, and presuming that he had brought him into the temple with him. Now these were the only proper witnesses, who might therefore be now absent, because they could testify nothing to the purpose.

20 Or else let these same here say, if they have found any evil doing in me, while I stood before the council,

Apparently the Jews from Asia, who started the mess, were not even here to accuse him. Of course, the Pharisees and chief priests are only too happy to take over the accusations.

21 Except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day.

Paul says, "the only thing they can accuse me of is preaching the resurrection of the dead.

22 And when Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowledge of that way, he deferred them, and said, When Lysias the chief captain shall come down, I will know the uttermost of your matter.

One of two things is happening here. Either Felix doesn't believe Paul, or he does believe him and wants to keep him around.

23 And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul, and to let him have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister or come unto him.

Felix doesn't seem to consider Paul a threat and gives him some limited freedom under the supervision of a centurion. This means he can have visits from his friends.

24 And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ.

Felix was later forced to step down because of his mistreatment of his Jewish subjects. This is odd, or maybe not, because his wife was a Jew though an unbeliever.

25 And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.

God's standard of righteousness is the Lord Jesus Christ. With Paul witnessing about judgment to come, Felix was under conviction but let salvation pass him by. I've said it before but we all need to remind ourselves constantly that one day we will all stand before Him and be judged one way or the other. The saved for reward and the lost for the lake of fire for eternity. This is the opportunity Felix passed up that day.

26 He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him.

In redneck terms, Felix was hoping for a bribe from Paul but Paul wasn't about to pay for his freedom.

27 But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.

One interesting note on Felix, and having nothing to do with Paul's case is that Felix was a sadist and hated by the Jews. They complained constantly to Rome and later he did not escape punishment, but was sent bound by Festus, his successor, unto Nero.

ACTS CHAPTER TWENTY FIVE

1 Now when Festus was come into the province, after three days he ascended from Caesarea to Jerusalem.

Festus has just succeeded Felix as governor. He was, on the whole, an upright governor and much better, for the Jews, than Felix..

2 Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him,

This is a new plot to kill Paul on the way back to Jerusalem.

3 And desired favour against him, that he would send for him to

Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him.

If they couldn't kill him on the way to Caesarea they would kill him on the way back to Jerusalem. That bunch with the vow not to eat, or drink, until Paul was dead must be getting hungry by now..

4 But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself would depart shortly thither.

Festus is more accommodating than Felix but still, no pushover.

5 Let them therefore, said he, which among you are able, go down with me, and accuse this man, if there be any wickedness in him.

Let the chief men among you go down with me, and accuse him, so that the charges may be properly sustained; not by a mere lawyer like Tertullus.

6 And when he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Caesarea; and the next day sitting on the judgment seat commanded Paul to be brought.

So Festus stalled for ten days and let the Jewish leaders wait.

7 And when he was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove.

No doubt the Jews made up many false charges against Paul but could not prove any of them.

8 While he answered for himself, Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all.

Paul defended himself and disproved all the charges against him.

9 But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me?

Festus doesn't want to offend the Jews but has no real evidence against Paul and he cannot afford to lose sight of the fact that Paul is a Roman citizen.

10 Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest.

All the court agree that he might have been liberated if he had not appealed to Rome.

11 For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar.

Think back to the lessons we have had in the past few weeks. Paul has continually been pushed in the direction of Rome by the Holy Spirit. First, the Holy Spirit refused to let him go into Asia, then the Holy Spirit refused to let him go into Spain. Then the Holy Spirit told Paul at least four times not to go back to Jerusalem but Paul disobeyed and went to Jerusalem anyway. Now we see what happens when God is continually disobeyed. Paul was going to Rome, which was where the Holy Spirit wanted him to go, even if he had to go in chains. The gospel, when going according to God's plan, always travels east to west. One final thought before we leave this verse. Paul was not against capital punishment, even his own if he was found guilty.

12 Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go.

Paul's appeal to Caesar must have been a great relief to Festus. This gets him off the hook with the Jews and will get Paul off his hands.

13 And after certain days king Agrippa and Bernice came unto Caesarea to salute Festus.

Agrippa is a descendant of Herod the Great. Rome has appointed him king over Caesarea Philippi. Bernice is an interesting character. She is a Jewess, but an unbeliever and she is Agrippa's sister. She is married to Polemo II, king of Cilicia but is Agrippa's mistress. Yeah, you heard that right, brother and sister.

14 And when they had been there many days, Festus declared Paul's cause unto the king, saying, There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix:

Festus knew that Agrippa knew the Jewish law better than he did so passed the buck to Agrippa. This heathen had a better sense of justice than the Jewish religious leaders.

15 About whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, desiring to have judgment against him.

The chief priests would rather have had him condemned without a trial, just as they had gotten our Saviour condemned, though the judge declared that he found no fault in him,

16 To whom I answered, It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have licence to answer for himself concerning the crime laid

against him.

This law protects the people of a nation and is the basis for our own Article VI of the Bill of Rights. Secret tribunals are the weapon of choice of dictators. We are getting dangerously close with some of our homeland security regulations. Secret warrants signed by secret judges are a prime example.

17 Therefore, when they were come hither, without any delay on the morrow I sat on the judgment seat, and commanded the man to be brought forth.

18 Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed:

The Roman law did not give up the lives of fellow Romans easily. There had to be absolute proof of guilt before any Roman was put to death.

19 But had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.

This is the only thing Felix seems to have trouble with. To Festus, once you are dead you stay that way.

20 And because I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked him whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters.

Paul was smart not to return to Jerusalem. As strange as it may be he is safer in the hands of the Romans.

21 But when Paul had appealed to be reserved unto the hearing of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Caesar.

Festus account seems to have been honest and straightforward but he still finds no evidence against Paul.

22 Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. To morrow, said he, thou shalt hear him.

23 And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains, and principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment Paul was brought forth.

Notice that Paul is no longer a religious prisoner but is now a political prisoner of the Roman government. What this means, in real life, is that he will likely never get out of prison.

24 And Festus said, King Agrippa, and all men which are here present with

us, ye see this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me, both at Jerusalem, and also here, crying that he ought not to live any longer.

This is the “high society” crowd, or people of influence. Today they would be Washington insiders.

25 But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself hath appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him.

26 Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and specially before thee, O king Agrippa, that, after examination had, I might have somewhat to write.

Felix has no idea what to write about Paul. He has found nothing really to hold him for and only does so to satisfy Paul's demand to be tried before Augustus.

27 For it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not withal to signify the crimes laid against him.

Paul has given the same testimony to Agrippa that he gave to Felix.

ACTS CHAPTER TWENTY SIX

1 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself:

Roman law permitted the prisoner to defend himself. Remember that back in Acts:9 Paul was told he would witness to kings. It is interesting, in what follows, to see the attention shift from Festus and Agrippa to the gospel.

2 I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews:

For four generations the Herod's have obstructed God's work through the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, we have Paul preaching to one of the Herod descendants in person.

3 Especially because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently.

Paul asks for patience because he knows his remarks will not be brief. His flattery in this case, happens to be true. Agrippa is indeed an expert in Jewish customs and law.

4 My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews;

Paul was born in Tarsus, a Roman city, and sent to Jerusalem probably around age twelve for his education. You probably remember that he was taught by Gamaliel, a leading lawyer and Pharisee. All this seems to indicate that Paul's parents had some degree of wealth. These things cost money.

5 Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.

In this verse we find the first use of the word religion. Remember that rule of first mention. It sets the meaning for the other times the word will be mentioned. The only religion ever sanctioned by God is Judaism. Christianity, strictly speaking, is not a religion but a personal relationship with God.

6 And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God, unto our fathers:

This "hope" is actually the national hope of the nation of Israel and Paul knows this. Here he applies it to one Jew, that is, the Lord Jesus Christ.

7 Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews.

Paul knows that his beliefs are perfectly in line with the Jewish Old Testament. Jesus Christ is the fulfillment the Jews have been waiting for for centuries.

8 Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?

People have a lot of trouble with the concept of God raising the dead. I believe this comes from picturing God as some cosmic grandfather sitting up there somewhere, winking at our sins. For God, raising the dead is nothing. For instance, compare raising the dead to speaking the universe into existence.

9 I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

The way I understand this verse is that no one compelled, or even suggested, that Paul take on the persecution of Christians. This was something he decided to do on his own and then he sought permission from the chief priests.

10 Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when

they were put to death, I gave my voice against them.

Paul confesses his initial attempt to eradicate Christianity. At the time he did not believe Jesus had risen, or that he was the Messiah. There is an interesting word in this verse and that word is "saints" and it refers to Christians. It is used only once in the gospels, in Matthew, but four times in Acts, and fifty six times in the epistles and Revelation.

11 And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.

Paul's past unreasonable persecution of Christians now makes him extremely patient with his fellow Jews. The term "strange cities" means cities outside the Jewish jurisdiction.

12 Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests,

Paul's initial persecution of Christians is what now makes his story so powerful.

13 At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.

This light had to be brighter than the midday sun. All of the men saw this light. The light was so bright that it caused them all to fall to the ground. Before we leave this verse notice that Saul was saved outside of the land of Israel, in Syria, a Gentile country.

14 And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

In addition to the light there was a loud noise. All the men heard the noise but only Paul could hear the words. Notice that Paul hears Hebrew spoken. It is said by most commentators that Hebrew is the language of Heaven. Maybe it is but I do not know of any scripture that says that.

15 And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.

I wonder how long it took for Paul to get his voice back after hearing that statement.

16 But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which

thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;

Paul is called to minister but his main calling is to witness. Notice here that Jesus tells Paul that he will be giving him further instructions.

17 Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,

This is the point where Paul is officially sent to the Gentiles but he never got over his burden for his brethren the Jews. Looking at his ministry, he somehow managed to do a good job of reaching both groups.

18 To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

Notice here that you have five things that a proper ministry does. It shows the difference between light and darkness. It brings salvation, and, by that, forgiveness of sin. It brings sanctification and an inheritance. This is also your ministry if you are saved.

19 Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:

In other words, this comes from God.

20 But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.

Here, Paul gives a short account of the message that he preached everywhere.

21 For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me.

It was that word "Gentiles" that made the Jews angry. That was the real reason why they seized him in the Temple. Notice that Paul did not even mention the charges against him.

22 Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come:

The phrase "small and great" refers to witnessing to both the poor and to the leadership. Of Course Paul preached much more than Moses and the prophets. What this means is that nothing he preaches contradicts Moses and the prophets.

23 That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should

rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.

So Jesus Christ is the first to rise from the dead and is the guarantee that all will be resurrected.

24 And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.

There is absolutely no reason for Festus to interrupt. This is Satan at work trying to shift the conversation away from the gospel.

25 But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.

Paul calmly denies the accusation of insanity and points out that everything he says can be verified. In addition, anyone who compares the Old Testament prophecies with the historical facts about Jesus has to admit the truth of Paul's statements.

26 For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner.

Agrippa knew that these things were true since the life and work of Christ was well known. I like that phrase: "for this thing was not done in a corner". Nothing that the Lord Jesus Christ did in His public ministry was secret, or hidden.

27 King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.

This is a "trap" question. If Agrippa admits to believing the prophets then he knows he will be asked if he believes that Jesus fulfills these prophecies.

28 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.

There is a song, "Almost Persuaded", almost but lost. There is no almost. You are saved and on your way to heaven or you are not, that is lost, and on your way to the Lake of Fire for eternity. Think about a murderer who gets sentenced to life in prison. He's lucky. When he dies he gets out, even if it is in a body bag. In the Lake of Fire it is never over, you don't get out.

29 And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.

In other words, I wish everyone here was saved.

30 And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them:

By standing Agrippa indicates that the assembly is over.

31 And when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds.

They all know Paul is innocent and would have been happy to set him free except for his appeal to Caesar. Think about it this way, Paul could not allow the Jews to get him back to Jerusalem so he appealed to Caesar. Now he could go free except for that appeal. This is how the Holy Spirit works things out in order to get Paul, and the gospel, to Rome.

32 Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar.

Paul has been tried before the Jewish Sanhedrin, the Roman commander in Jerusalem, two Roman governors and now the king over the territory. He has one more to go, Caesar himself.

ACTS CHAPTER TWENTY SEVEN

1 And when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto one named Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band.

The book of Acts now reverts to the first person. Luke may have rejoined the band or, more likely, he had been nearby all along. Both Luke and Aristarchus accompanied Paul to Rome. One commentator mentioned that they may have gone as Paul's slaves since that is the only way they would have been able to travel with a prisoner. That makes no sense to me. How about just paying for your passage?

2 And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia; one Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us.

Julius, the centurion, has become good friends with Paul and recognizes the miraculous things that are happening around him.

3 And the next day we touched at Sidon. And Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave him liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself.

Paul is allowed to go ashore and visit other believers. It is possible that Paul's Roman citizenship got him extra privileges. It is also possible that Julius may have become a believer while escorting Paul to Rome.

4 And when we had launched from thence, we sailed under Cyprus, because the winds were contrary.

Sailing under Cyprus just means they sailed on the leeward side of the island for protection from the wind.

5 And when we had sailed over the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia.

6 And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing into Italy; and he put us therein.

Very little good comes out of Alexandria, Egypt, a type of the world. This is where the manuscripts for the corrupt bible translations come from. One study bible said the Alexandrian manuscripts "slithered" from Egypt to Rome. I think the word, "slithered" describes it perfectly.

7 And when we had sailed slowly many days, and scarce were come over against Cnidus, the wind not suffering us, we sailed under Crete, over against Salmone;

We would say they are running late. The winds have been against them from the beginning. God uses the weather and in this case he seems to be timing the trip for His purposes.

8 And, hardly passing it, came unto a place which is called The fair havens; nigh whereunto was the city of Lasea.

The fair havens the place where it is safest for ships to ride in or enter. A place of this name remains to this day in the island of Candia.

9 Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished them,

The "fast" mentioned is the "day of atonement". Everyone agrees that, with the delay due to the weather, that sailing on to Italy would be foolish at this time of year.

10 And said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives.

Sailing at this time of year, in the Mediterranean, was especially dangerous. It would be like us going sailing when there are dangers of hurricanes in the Gulf.

11 Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul.

Who would you believe? Would you believe the ships captain or a prisoner in chains?

12 And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice, and there to winter; which is an haven of Crete, and lieth toward the south west and north west.

The men on the ship had to make a quick decision and decide whether to sail or not. Fair Havens was a bad place to stay during the winter. Winds blew into the harbour from the east and north-east. That made it difficult and dangerous for the ships there. Paul advised the men to stay at Fair Havens. He said that it was too dangerous to sail. Julius did not follow Paul's advice but agreed with the ship's captain and with the owner. Probably, the owner wanted to deliver the grain on time.

13 And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, loosing thence, they sailed close by Crete.

A nice, soft wind but it did not last.

14 But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon.

15 And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive.

This was a ship for hauling grain and if a person set out to design a boat less suited for storms it would be hard to do. The ship was about 140 feet long by 36 feet wide and 33 feet tall. It had a tiny rudder and was steered by two large paddles from the stern. There was one mast with one square sail. Basically it was a big, top heavy, box.

16 And running under a certain island which is called Claudia, we had much work to come by the boat:

The boat mentioned here is a ship's dory and is being towed. This is still common today. This one had become full of water and was hard to handle.

17 Which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and, fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, strake sail, and so were driven.

They managed to get the dory on board then put some cables around the ship

to keep it from splitting apart. This gives us some idea of the fierceness of this storm they are in.

18 And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship;

Now they start tossing overboard all the unnecessary items.

19 And the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship.

Things are getting more desperate. Now even the ships tackle goes overboard keeping only that part which was absolutely necessary to guide the ship.

20 And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away.

The statement that they haven't seen the stars, nor sun, in many days means they are lost. They have lost all hope.

21 But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss.

Paul is saying, "I told you so", but he is saying it for a reason. He says this so they will believe what he is about to tell them.

22 And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship.

23 For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve,

The phrase "whose I am, and whom I serve", tells us who this angel is. It is the Lord Jesus Christ since that is who Paul serves. The angel has said they will lose the ship but all the lives will be spared. Notice that all of these people now seem to be listening to, and believing, what Paul says. He just may have converted a good many of them.

24 Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.

Paul is destined to stand before Caesar so he is safe and God has given him the lives of the others. No doubt Paul has been doing some serious praying for his shipmates.

25 Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.

Believe God exactly as He says it.

26 Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island.

27 But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria, about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country;

Imagine how low moral must have been by now. Even the seasoned sailors must have given up by now. Two weeks with no control of the ship and now they are approaching land and still have no control.

28 And sounded, and found it twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms.

A fathom is 6 feet so they start checking at the 120 foot depth and move into shallower water. This tells them they are getting near land. This must have been a relief after two weeks lost at sea.

29 Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day.

Remember from verse 27 that it is about midnight. Don't you love the phrase, "wished for the day"? With the storm and overcast it must have been totally dark.

30 And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under colour as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship,

The sailors are about to desert and leave the others to fend for themselves. They put up a flag signaling that they are just going out to pull up the anchors. If they had been honest the flag would have been the abandon ship flag.

31 Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.

God had promised Paul to save them all but that was conditioned on them staying together.

32 Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off.

So, the soldiers cut the ropes that held the lifeboat and let it fall into the sea.

33 And while the day was coming on, Paul besought them all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing.

34 Wherefore I pray you to take some meat: for this is for your health: for

there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you.

Just before dawn, Paul urged everyone to eat something,saying, you have worried for 14 days! During that time, you have not eaten anything. Now I urge you to eat some food in order to stay alive. If you do that, no one will suffer.

35 And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat.

After Paul had said that, he took some bread. He thanked God. In front of everyone, and began to eat.

36 Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat.

Everybody feels better after a good meal.

37 And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls.

The Schofield reference says there are 76 on the ship but my bible says 276. That may be a typo in Schofield but the point is,check on everyone. All humans make mistakes.

38 And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea.

The owner must have hated to see this. Tossing out the cargo made the ship lighter.

39 And when it was day, they knew not the land: but they discovered a certain creek with a shore, into the which they were minded, if it were possible, to thrust in the ship.

The crews' plan is to run the ship aground on shore but remember that the angel has said the ship would perish and so it does. With the front on a sandbar the stern is pounded to pieces by the waves..

40 And when they had taken up the anchors, they committed themselves unto the sea, and loosed the rudder bands, and hoised up the mainsail to the wind, and made toward shore.

They are going to give it one last,desperate try. Running toward the beach under full sail means they intended to beach the ship.

41 And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the forepart stuck fast, and remained unmoveable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves.

42 And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them

should swim out, and escape.

The soldiers decided to kill all the prisoners. They did not want them to escape because to a Roman soldier losing a prisoner meant taking that prisoners place.

43 But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from their purpose; and commanded that they which could swim should cast themselves first into the sea, and get to land:

This is more of an indication of two things. The centurion has become friends with Paul and this also shows the hand of God at work.

44 And the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land.

Those who can swim do so and the others make their way on boards and other junk from the ship. All make it safely ashore just as God had promised Paul.

ACTS CHAPTER TWENTY EIGHT

1 And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita.

They have now traveled about 500 miles from Fair Haven. It has taken two weeks during which they were lost and could not get bearings from the sun or stars. The island called Melita, in the verse, is now known as Malta.

2 And the barbarous people shewed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold.

In Paul's day anyone who did not speak Greek was called a barbarian. This was not negative and these people showed that they would not be what we call barbarians today.

3 And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand.

God, by this miracle, prepares this people to be civil and courteous unto Paul, and to believe the gospel which he preached. This work of God was God's seal to his ministry and to show that Paul's authority came from God.

4 And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live.

No doubt the islanders knew the type of snake this was and waited for Paul to drop dead from the bite. Since Paul is a prisoner they assume he is guilty of some horrible crime.

5 And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm.

6 Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god.

They waited enough time for Paul to die from the bite. They realize, when he doesn't die that this is something supernatural and assume he is a god.

7 In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously.

You can see the hand of God here. He leads Paul to the chief man of the island and that person puts him up. Then comes the further opportunity to heal the man's father.

8 And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him.

This miracle of healing took place so that the heathen could believe in God and this also brought many others to be healed.

9 So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed:

There is an odd thing here. There is no record of Luke, the physician, healing any of these. The healing was done by prayer and faith. In fact, it is usually said that Luke accompanied Paul as his personal physician. The bible does not say that. Luke went along to help spread the gospel.

10 Who also honoured us with many honours; and when we departed, they laded us with such things as were necessary.

Paul and the others have to wait out the winter on Malta but when they are ready to leave, about three months later, the islanders provide them with everything they need.. This is one of those cases where I wish the Holy Spirit had added just a little bit more. I am curious to know just how many converts Paul had in that three month stay.

11 And after three months we departed in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle, whose sign was Castor and Pollux.

Sailing, in the Mediterranean resumes in February. By now those sailing with Paul know something of the God who can really protect them at sea.

12 And landing at Syracuse, we tarried there three days.

Syracuse is a good sized city on the eastern coast of Sicily. From here they sail north.

13 And from thence we fetched a compass, and came to Rhegium: and after one day the south wind blew, and we came the next day to Puteoli:

They have finally reached the coast of Italy. These cities are on the “toe” of Italy. Rome is still seventy miles further.

14 Where we found brethren, and were desired to tarry with them seven days: and so we went toward Rome.

This is obviously God at work on the centurion. This soldier allows Paul a seven day visit with the brethren. There is little doubt in my mind that the centurion had become a believer though the bible never says that.

15 And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii forum, and The three taverns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage.

These believers had come about forty miles from Rome to greet Paul. He is being treated as a hero and is greatly encouraged by the fact that these are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ in the heart of the Roman empire.

16 And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him.

Paul is given a lot of freedom and is allowed to live by himself though he is always under guard.

17 And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together: and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans.

This is the elders of the synagogue. Paul wanted to explain why he was in Rome and what his message was. He makes it clear that he has nothing to accuse his nation of.

18 Who, when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me.

Rome was the most important Gentile city in the world. But, Paul still followed his usual custom and preached to the Jews first. He told them why he was there as a prisoner.

19 But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar; not that I had ought to accuse my nation of.

Paul wanted the Jews to know that he was a true Jew. That was why he asked them to meet him. He was a prisoner because of his belief in the Jewish Messiah.

20 For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.

The words, "the hope of Israel", refer to the resurrection of the dead and to the Messianic kingdom.

21 And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judaea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came shewed or spake any harm of thee.

Maybe these Jews are just being tactful because communication between Jerusalem and Rome was very good and it had been two and a half years since the riot in Jerusalem.

22 But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against.

Whether they had heard of him or not, these Jews are curious about Paul's message.

23 And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening.

A meeting is arranged and a large gathering of people turn out to hear Paul. He spends the entire day preaching Jesus. True to their pattern some believe and some do not.

24 And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.

This is always true. In every church group there will be some who believe only parts of the scripture. In other words, they pick and choose what they WANT to believe.

25 And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that

Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers,

God's word brings division and that is it's purpose. The big division was brought by Jesus himself. Some people will believe and some will not.

26 Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive:

As those who did not believe are leaving Paul quotes Isaiah 6:9-10. Jesus used this same quotation about His ministry in Mark 4:12

27 For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

These people have heart trouble. Their ears and eyes have turned away from the things of God. Be sure to notice that this is their choice. They have voluntarily done this to themselves. Unbelief is Satan's main tool.

28 Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it.

Since so many of the Jews reject the gospel Paul has carried it to the Gentiles. Even after all this rejection Paul still as a great burden for his people. This is the final turning point from the Jews to the Gentiles.

29 And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves.

This entire verse is removed from many of the new, corrupt bibles. Apparently the scholars of this age are just as blind as the Jews.

30 And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him,

This shows the high regard in which Paul was held. No doubt he has made friends with most of Caesar's household by now.

31 Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.

It is puzzling that Luke did not include Paul's fate but it was not his intention to write a biography. Luke's purpose was to record the spread of the gospel from Jerusalem, to Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the known world.