

# ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

## INTRODUCTION

Acts is of vital importance to the Christian Faith:

- It gives important details concerning the ascension of Christ, which are presented only in summary form in the Gospels.<sup>1</sup>
- It contains the only account of the descent of the Holy Spirit and the origin of the Church.
- It presents the apostles' answer to the question, "What must I do to be saved?"
- It describes the origin of elders and deacons and their roles in Church leadership and ministry..
- It is the record of the expansion of the church: first to Jews, then to half-breed Jews (Samaritans) and then to the Gentile world.
- It displays the vital and essential role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church.

For these, and host of other reasons, it can be said that without the direction received from the information in Acts, Christianity would be a very different faith expression than it has become.

### THE NAME OF THE DOCUMENT

The original document that we know as *The Acts of The Apostles*, did not have a title. The title that it has borne since the Second Century is πράξεις ἀποστόλων (*Práxeis Apostólōn*) – *Acts of Apostles*.

The definite article, *the*, is missing, in the title, therefore the title, *Acts of Apostles*, does not imply that the document contains **all** of the acts of **all** of the apostles.

Some have suggested that a more appropriate title would be *Acts of the Holy Spirit*, since the presence and activities of the Spirit are so abundant in the narrative.

In all probability, the origin of the name is its literary similarity to *praxis literature*, a genre of biographical history that was popular in the era in which the document was written. These works depicted the extraordinary acts or deeds of a prominent figure, narrating a sequence of events according to the formulaic structure used by biographers of the era. Examples of this style are seen in,

- Calisthenes', *Acts of Alexander*
- Sosylus', *Acts of Hannibal*
- Augustus' self-authored obituary, *the Acts of Augustus*.

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<sup>1</sup> **Matthew** closes with a scene that takes place on a mountain in Galilee, when Jesus gave the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20)

**Mark** closes with a scene in which the apostles were eating a meal and Jesus appeared to them. An abbreviated version of the Great Commission is given, then closes with the statement that Jesus was taken up into heaven. No details of the ascension are given.

**Luke** closes with a scene in which Jesus appears to the apostles and others who were in the room. After a brief dialogue, He gives the promise of the Holy Spirit and the instructions that they were to wait for the Spirit before proceeding to do anything. The account concludes with a statement that Jesus led them to Bethany and His ascension (Luke 24:36-53)

**John** closes with the scene at the seashore and Peter's thrice affirming his love for Jesus, and a prediction about Peter's closing years and death.

*Acts of Apostles* resembles this genre, and it is quite natural that people would refer to it as *Praexis Apostolon*. The Second Century Greek bishop Irenaeus,<sup>2</sup> in his treatise, *Adversus Haereses (Against Heresies)* referred to the text as, *Praexis Apostolon*, and it has been formally known by that name ever since.

In the Codex Sinaiticus, the oldest extant copy of the complete New Testament, written between 380 and 350 AD, the document is given the simple title, *Acts*.

## THE AUTHOR OF ACTS OF APOSTLES

### The Testimony of the Early Church

A plethora of early church authors attribute *Acts of the Apostles* to Luke. Here are some of the more prominent:

- Irenaeus 132-202 AD (*Against Heresies* 3.14.1).
- Clement of Alexandria 150-215 AD (*Paedagogus* 2.1.15 and *Stromata* 5.12.82)
- The Muratorian Canon 170 AD<sup>3</sup>
- Origen of Alexandria 185-253 AD: (Eusebius's *Church History* 6.25.14).
- Jerome: 342-420 AD (*Illustrious Men* 7).
- Augustine: 354-430 AD (*Consensus of the Gospels* 4.8.9).

Without exception, all early Christian writings that mention the author, ascribe *Acts* to Luke.

### The Gospel of Luke and Acts

Another evidence to consider is the fact that it is obvious that the same person who composed the Gospel account known as the *Gospel of Luke* also is the person who composed *Acts*. This is apparent from the opening statements of both documents.

The Gospel of Luke begins,

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

Referring to the Gospel of Luke, *Acts* begins,

*The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when He was taken up, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen. (Acts 1:1-2)*

It is clear that the author of the Gospel of Luke and *Acts* were composed by the same person.

The oldest manuscript containing the opening section of the Third Gospel is the Papyrus Bodmer XIV (ca. 200 AD). The Bodmer papyrus states that the Third Gospel is the *euangelion kata Loukan* - the *Gospel according to Luke*.

All of the early Christian writers that comment on the authorship, state that both the third Gospel and *Acts* were written by Luke.

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<sup>2</sup> c. 130 – c. 202 AD He had been taught by Polycarp, who had been an associate of the apostle, John and thus was the last-known living connection with the Apostles.

<sup>3</sup> The Muratorian Canon (named for the man who discovered it, Father Ludovico Antonio Muratori) does not contain Hebrews, James, I & II Peter, and III John.

## The evidence of the *WE* passages in Acts

Another element related to the authorship of *Acts*, is the presence of the, *we*, passages. The author uses the terms, *we*, *us*, and *our*, indicating that he was present with Paul on several occasions. One such occasion is the Acts 16 account of Paul's Macedonian vision.

*And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a certain man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." And when he had seen the vision, immediately WE sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called US to preach the gospel to them. Therefore putting out to sea from Troas, WE ran a straight course to Samothrace, and on the day following to Neapolis;<sup>2</sup> and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia, a Roman colony; and WE were staying in this city for some days. (Acts 16:9-12)*

The narrative of Paul's voyage to Rome is one of the *we* sections. The author of Acts traveled with Paul (Acts 21:1-16) and stayed with him while he was imprisoned.

All evidence points to Paul's being released from prison after two years and then, two years later, being arrested once again (see ADDENDUM A). During Paul's last days (during his second imprisonment), he wrote to his son in the faith, Timothy. Paul stated that Luke remained with him, proving that Luke was a loyal and trusted companion, when others had abandoned the apostle.

*for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service. (II Timothy 4:10-11)*

It is interesting to note that each time Paul mentions Luke by name (three times), Demas also is mentioned.<sup>4</sup> In addition to the II Timothy citation, the other two mentions of Luke are in Philemon and Colossians:

- *Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow workers. (Philemon 1:23-24)*
- *Luke, the beloved physician, sends you his greetings, and also Demas. (Colossians 4:14)*

Note that Paul identified Luke as a doctor. This fact would explain the great detailed descriptions that Luke recorded when he described episodes in his writings. Furthermore, although it cannot be detected in translation, the original Greek in which Luke wrote the Gospel and Acts, were written with such excellent literary expression, that it is obvious that the author was a well-educated man.

## THE DATE OF THE COMPOSITION OF ACTS

The narrative of Paul's arrest and his court appearances guide us in determining the date of the composition of Acts.

After a series of lower court hearings, in which Jewish leaders falsely accused Paul of misdeeds, he exercised his rights as a Roman citizen, and appealed to Caesar.<sup>5</sup> At one point, king Agrippa

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<sup>4</sup> In addition to these citations, the KJV, at the conclusion of II Corinthians, has this statement, *The second epistle to the Corinthians was written from Philippi, a city of Macedonia, by Titus and Lucas [i.e. Luke] (2Co 13:14 KJV)*. This clearly was a late addition to the text. It does not enjoy textual integrity and so it is not included in more recent versions.

<sup>5</sup> Acts 25:11

said that because the claims against Paul were false, Paul would have been released, had he not earlier appealed to Caesar (Acts 26:32).

Caesar's court docket was quite full. *Acts* closes by stating that Paul had been under house-arrest in Rome for two years, awaiting his appearance before Caesar.<sup>6</sup>

These facts enable us to arrive at the date of *Acts*' composition.

- Paul was arrested in Jerusalem at the Feast of Pentecost.<sup>7</sup>
- He was held in prison for two years, until Festus' arrival in Judea.<sup>8</sup> It is a well-established fact that Nero appointed Festus as Procurator of Judea in 60 AD.<sup>9</sup>
- Therefore, Paul's arrest in Jerusalem was on Pentecost, 58 AD.
- His departure to Rome was in the fall of 60 AD.
- He reached Rome in the spring of 61 AD.
- The narrative closes two years later, in 63 AD, with Paul remaining in house-arrest.

Therefore, we accept 63 AD, as the date of the composition of *Acts*.

### CHRONOLOGY

With the exception of the material that immediately follows the account of the activities of those who left Jerusalem after the dispersion of the church, *Acts* is arranged in chronological order.

The date of the Pentecost described in Acts 2, is a bit uncertain. In order to seek to ascertain that date, the date of Christ's birth and the length of His ministry must be determined.

We know that Jesus was born at around 5 BC. This is determined by the following details revealed in Matthew 2:1-20:

- He was born during the lifetime of Herod.
- Immediately after Jesus' birth, an angel instructed Joseph to take the baby and flee to Egypt.
- While Jesus' was still an infant, Herod died. Herod died in 4 BC
- Immediately after Herod's death Joseph was instructed by an angel to take the infant Jesus and Mary back to Israel.
- Joseph and the holy family returned to Israel 4-3BC

Luke 3:23 informs us that Jesus was about 30 years of age when He began His ministry. Accepting 5 BC as the date of His birth, would place the beginning of His ministry at 25 AD. By calculating the number of Passovers that the Gospels describe as taking place during His ministry, it is apparent that His ministry lasted approximately 3 ½ years. That would place His ascension as taking place in 29 AD. Therefore, the Pentecost described in Acts 2 would have occurred in 29/30 AD. 30 AD is a generally accepted and convenient date to accept.

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<sup>6</sup> Acts 28:16, 30

<sup>7</sup> Acts 20:14; 21:17-23

<sup>8</sup> Acts 24:23--27

<sup>9</sup> Conybeare and Howson, *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, Appendix II, note C. (Hartford, Connecticut: The S. S. Scranton Company) 1905. pp. 899f. (republished Grand Rapids, Eerdmans Publishing) 1949. Also see, <https://biblia.com/factbook/Festus>

## THE HISTORICAL ACCURACY OF ACTS

To a large degree, archaeological discoveries have supported Luke's historical accuracy.

For example, we now know that his use of titles for various kinds of local and provincial government officials—procurators, consuls, praetors, politarchs, Asiarchs, and others— are exactly correct, for the times and localities about which he was writing.

This accuracy is doubly remarkable because the use of these terms was in a constant state of flux due to the constantly changing political status of various communities.

There have not been any serious challenges to the historical accuracy of Luke's narrative.

### SECTION ONE: THE ORIGIN, PROGRESS, AND DISPERSON OF THE CHURCH Chapters 1:1 – 8:4

#### The Prologue 1:1-5

*The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when He was taken up, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen.*

*To these He also presented Himself alive, after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days, and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God.*

*And gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; for John immersed <sup>10</sup> in water, but you shall be immersed in<sup>11</sup> the Holy Spirit not many days from now."*

Our attention is drawn to the significance of the statement that the Gospel of Luke recorded all that Jesus ***began*** to do and teach. Occasionally, a Bible teacher will state that based on Luke's use of the term, *began*, to describe his Gospel account, that *Acts* describes what Jesus continued to do and teach after the close of that account. However, this is a questionable conclusion.

The term rendered, *began*, is ἤρξατο (*erxato*), which is the indicative, aorist, middle, 3<sup>rd</sup> person, singular, of the verb, ἄρχω (*archo*). ἄρχω is a verb, whose basic meaning is, *to rule*. However, in the middle voice (as it occurs here), it usually implies, *to begin*, or *to be the first to do something*. It also is sometimes used to describe someone's returning to a subject or activity, after having been interrupted.

Interestingly, Luke uses the term often when he is recounting an event.<sup>12</sup> He seems to use it as an idiom, with which he customarily began a narrative. Should he have omitted the term and began the narrative with the past tense of the verb it proceeds, nothing would be missing in any of the instances in which he used the term. For example, he could have written, *all that Jesus did*

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<sup>10</sup> The term is ἵδατι (*hidato*), the dative singular of ἵδωρ (*hudor*) which means, in, with, or by, water.

<sup>11</sup> The Greek terms are ἐν, πνεύματι βαπτισθήσεσθε ἀγίω (*en pneumatī baptisthesesthe hagio*), literally, *in spirit holy you will be immersed*

<sup>12</sup> Examples: Lk. 4:21;. 7:15. 24, 38; 9:12;11:29; 12:1; 14:30; 15:14; 19:45; 20:9; Acts 1:1; 18:26; 24:2: 27:35

*and taught until the day He was taken up.* This is similar to the manner in which stories often begin with the phrase, *once upon a time.*

Therefore, given Luke's literary pattern, it seems that Luke did not intend to imply that Acts was what Jesus continued to do and teach, after the close of the Gospel account.

Also, the fact that the phrase closes with, *until the until the day when He was taken up,* seems to put an end to the activity described.

Even so, there is a sense in which, after His ascension, Jesus did continue to do and teach, through the Holy Spirit.

The term rendered as, *apostles*, is an anglicization of the Greek term, ἀπόστολος (*apostolos*) which is the noun form of the verb, ἀποστέλλω (*apostello*), - *to send with a commission.* The emphasis of this word is not on the fact that one is sent, as much as it is on what one is commissioned to do.<sup>13</sup>

For example, in Philippians 2:25, Paul uses the term for Epaphroditus, whom the Philippian Church commissioned to take money to Paul, while he was imprisoned.

*But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your apostle<sup>14</sup> and minister to my need;*

The apostles referenced in verse 1, were the eleven apostles that Jesus had chosen and commissioned during His earthly ministry. Judas, the traitor, had hanged himself. Therefore, at that time, there were only eleven apostles. As we will see later in this chapter, Matthias was chosen to replace Judas, thus completing the circle of twelve.

The term, *apostle*, later was applied to Barnabas and Paul (Acts 14:4, 14)

Three very important details in the prologue are:

- Jesus appeared to the apostles over a period of forty days, in a manner that was unquestionable proof that He had risen from the dead.
- In His appearances, He imparted important information concerning the Kingdom of God that the apostles were to pass on to those who followed.
- They were to wait for the immersion in the Holy Spirit before they began fulfilling the Great Commission.

### **Jesus' Parting Words and the Ascension Acts 1:6-11**

*And so when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?"*

*He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority;*

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<sup>13</sup> Teachers often say that apostles are *sent ones*. That is not an adequate definition of the term. Should the fact that they were sent be the emphasis, the term would be some form of πέμπω (*pempo*), which means, *to send*.

<sup>14</sup> In order to avoid confusion, most English translations have rendered the term in this passage as. *messenger*. The Greek term in the text is *apostle*.

*but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."*

*And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.*

*And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was departing, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them;<sup>15</sup>*

*and they also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."*

All of the Old Testament prophetic passages concerning the Kingdom of God were understood by Jews as referring to the role of Israel. Even the apostles, who had heard Jesus' teaching concerning the Kingdom, continued to have this view.

### EXCURSUS

#### The Kingdom of God

*Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or, 'There it is!' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst." (Luke 17:20-21)*

Greek scholars disagree as to whether or not Luke 17:21 should be rendered as *the kingdom of God is within you* (KJV, NIV), or, *the kingdom of God is in your midst* (NAS). The Greek clause is, ἐντὸς ὑμῶν ἐστὶν (*entos humon estin*). The question faced is how to render, ἐντὸς. This preposition is used with both meanings in Greek literature.<sup>16</sup>

- If it means, *in your midst*, then it would refer to the person of Jesus who was in their midst at that moment.
- If it means, *within you*, it refers to the rule of God within the heart of the individual, rather than some observable domain.

David Williams has stated that both the Hebrew and Greek terms rendered as *kingdom*, involved *rule* (i.e., authority), rather than *realm*.<sup>17</sup> The concept of Kingdom involved *kingship*

<sup>15</sup> The same description of Angelic beings is found in other New Testament passages, for example, Luke 24:4; Acts 10:30; 12:7

<sup>16</sup> Bauer, Gingrich, Danker, *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago & London, The University of Chicago Press) Second Edition, 1960, page 269

<sup>17</sup> David J. Williams, *New International Biblical Commentary, Acts* (Peabody, Mass. Hendrickson Publishers) 1990, page 26

more than it did a kingdom as a *domain*. This understanding is substantiated by a number of Greek lexicons.<sup>18</sup>

Jesus' response to the apostles, *It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority....* is reminiscent of Deuteronomy 29:29, "*The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.*"

God reveals to us what we need to know in order to obey Him and to fulfill our purposes on the earth. Much aberrant and divisive teaching have resulted from the efforts of those who cannot be content with this fact, but instead are obsessed with finding hidden secrets in Scripture – especially in prophecies.

The angelic promise of His return and the language used to describe the event is echoed in other New Testament passages. For example:

- *Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. Even so. Amen. (Revelation 1:7)*
- *For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)*

#### **Waiting in the Upper Room Acts 1:12-14**

*Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away.*

*And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying; that is, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James.*

*These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.*

Luke 24:50 informs us that the location of Jesus's final meeting with the apostles and His ascension, was at Bethany, which was at the summit of Mount Olivet. It was a Sabbath day's journey from Jerusalem. A Sabbath day's journey was 2/3 to 7/8 of a mile.<sup>19</sup>

The renumeration of the eleven apostles is important – all of those to whom Jesus had given the commission were at their post, awaiting the promised power from on high.

The upper room where they were staying would have been a *kataluma* (κατάλυμα), a guest room in a house. It was the custom to have such a room in Jewish homes and it was in such a

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<sup>18</sup> Bauer, Gingrich, Danker, page 134; Moulton & Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament Revised* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan) 1978, page 67; Friberg, *Analytical Greek Lexicon* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan) 1967. Entry 4605; etc.

<sup>19</sup> In order to avoid working on the Sabbath, in violation of the Mosaic commandment, the Jews had established how far one could walk without it's being work and therefore in violation of the Sabbatical prohibition against working on that day (See ADDENDUM E)



room that the last supper took place.<sup>20</sup> It is possible that this upper room was the same one in which the last supper had taken place.

In all probability, this was not the location of the events recorded in the following narrative. The guest room would not have accommodated a gathering of approximately 120 people. There were places in the Temple environs where groups could gather. The fact that the spiritual manifestations described were seen and heard by a large crowd, would cause us to conclude that the eleven left their quarters to meet with the others in one of the locations in the Temple. Such would not have been true if they had been in a guest room in a private residence. Furthermore, their gathering in a location within the Temple environs is consistent with the closing statement of Luke's Gospel, *and were continually in the temple, praising God.* (Luke 24:53).

The women who were in the group would have been those who had accompanied Him from Galilee. These had witnessed His crucifixion and had remained with the apostles (Luke 8:2-3; 23:49,55).

This is the last time that Mary, the mother of Jesus, appears in New Testament.

Also, it is significant that Jesus' brothers<sup>21</sup> were present. We do not know where or when these, who had been doubters,<sup>22</sup> had come to realize His divinity and became closely identified with the apostles, but by this time, they had become their associates.

### **The Place of Judas Filled Acts 1:15-26**

*And at this time Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren (a gathering of about one hundred and twenty persons was there together), and said,*

*"Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. For he was counted among us, and received his portion in this ministry."*

*(Now this man acquired a field with the price of his wickedness; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. And it became known to all who were living in Jerusalem; so that in their own language that field was called Hakeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)*

*"For it is written in the book of Psalms, 'Let his homestead be made desolate, And let no man dwell in it'; and, 'His office let another man take.'*

*It is therefore necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us-- beginning with the baptism of John, until the day that He was taken up from us-- one of these should become a witness with us of His resurrection."*

*And they put forward two men, Joseph called Barsabbas (who was also called Justus), and Matthias.*

*And they prayed, and said, "Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show which one of these two Thou hast chosen to occupy this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place."*

*And they drew lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.*

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<sup>20</sup> Matthew 26:18ff; Mark 14:13ff; Luke 22:10ff

<sup>21</sup> The Greek term, ἀδελφός (*adelphos*) can only be rendered as, *brother*. The word for *cousin*, is ἀνεψιός (*anepsios*). The word for *relative*, is συγγενής (*sungenays*).

<sup>22</sup> John 7:5

Note that Luke states that the number of those present was *about* 120. This is another example of Luke's literary style. When giving numerical data (both in the Gospel of Luke and Acts), Luke always qualifies it with the Greek particle ὥς or ὥσει (*hos – hosei*), which indicates *approximately*.

Peter addressed the group as, *brethren (brothers)*. He used the term in a spiritual sense, not in the same sense that it is used earlier to describe members of Jesus' family. Because Luke mentions women as being a part of the group, Peter's use of the term would have included both men and women.

Based on his understanding of Old Testament prophecy (no doubt led by the Spirit), Peter presented both the defection of Judas and the necessity of replacing him (Psalm 69:25; 109:8).

In the midst of quoting Peter's speech, Luke inserted a parenthesis describing the death of Judas. (*Now this man acquired a field with the price of his wickedness; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. And it became known to all who were living in Jerusalem; so that in their own language that field was called Hakeldama, that is, Field of Blood.*)

Those in the room to whom Peter spoke did not need an explanation concerning Judas' betrayal and his suicide, but Luke was writing for an audience (world-wide and future generations) that may not have known about Judas' fate. Since Luke had not been present when these events happened, he probably recounted what he had heard while visiting Jerusalem with Paul (probably in 57 AD).

In addition to Luke's second-hand account, we have Matthew's account of Judas' remorse and suicide.

*Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood."*

*But they said, "What is that to us? See to that yourself!"*

*And he threw the pieces of silver into the sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself.*

*And the chief priests took the pieces of silver and said, "It is not lawful to put them into the temple treasury, since it is the price of blood." And they counseled together and with the money bought the Potter's Field as a burial place for strangers.*

*For this reason, that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day.*

*Then that which was spoken through Jeremiah<sup>23</sup> the prophet was fulfilled, saying, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of the one whose price had been set by the sons of Israel; and they gave them for the Potter's Field, as the Lord directed me." (Matthew 27:3-10)*

Luke's parenthetical statement, *Now, this man acquired a field with the price of his wickedness*, implies that the field was bought in Judas' name.

As far back as Augustine, the view presented by teachers has been that the tree on which Judas hanged himself must have been in the field purchased with the blood money, and that while his

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<sup>23</sup> The direct, word for word quote, cited by Matthew, is in Zechariah 11:12-13, not Jeremiah. Jeremiah does have similar language and present the same truth, but not this word for word quote (Jeremiah 18:2-3; 32:6-15). Most assume that Luke had Jeremiah's text running in his mind but quoted Zechariah's brief and clear prophecy.

body was hanging from a branch on the tree, the rope gave way, resulting in the horrible scene described by Luke.<sup>24</sup>

A condition required for Judas' replacement was that the candidate had to have been with Jesus from the beginning of his public ministry until the time of His ascension. Having only a second-hand knowledge of Jesus' ministry was not sufficient. A first-hand, experiential knowledge, of Jesus' ministry was necessary.

A large number of disciples had followed Jesus during His public ministry. An example of this is the occasion in which Jesus chose twelve from the large crowd that followed Him. From this crowd, Jesus called forth twelve, and gave them the title of *apostle*, and commissioned them to their roles (Luke 6:12ff)<sup>25</sup> Other evidence of the large numbers that followed Jesus is His sending seventy on a preaching mission (Luke 10),

The qualifications did not require that the candidates would have to have been present for every event, but that they had been consistently traveling with Jesus as one of His disciples. For example, only three of the apostles, Peter, James, and John, were present at the transfiguration (Matthew 17:1ff).

Two of those among the 120 met the qualifications - Joseph called Barsabbas and Matthias. This is the first time either of these men are mentioned in the biblical record. Although not named before this Acts passage, they had been among the many disciples that had followed Jesus from during His public ministry.

Not wanting to err in making a choice, and probably uncertain as to which of the two should be commissioned, the group put the choice into the hands of God – they drew lots.<sup>26</sup> Matthias was God's choice and from this point onward, although not mentioned by name again, he was one of the twelve.

#### **The Descent of the Spirit Acts 2:1-4**

*And when the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.*

*And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent, rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.*

*And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them.*

*And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.*

John the Baptist had predicted that the Coming One would carry out an immersion in wind and fire.

*John answered and said to them all,*

*"As for me, I immerse you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will immerse you with the Holy Spirit and fire.*

*And His winnowing fork is in His hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into His barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."* (Luke 3:16-17)

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<sup>24</sup> The Latin Vulgate harmonizes Luke's parenthesis with the account in Matthew, by stating, *and having hanged himself, he burst open.*

<sup>25</sup> Fleeting described in Matthew 10:10:2ff

<sup>26</sup> See ADDENDUM C for information on the biblical practice of drawing/casting lots.

As we consider this event, the question naturally arises, *on whom did the Holy Spirit come?*

Many have answered that the Holy Spirit came upon *all* the disciples that were gathered together as described in Acts 1:15 (about 120). This view is based on the assumption that the statement, *they were all with one accord in one place,*<sup>27</sup> refers to the 120.

Further investigation of the text points to another conclusion.

Chapter and verse divisions in our present-day Bibles were not in the original texts. For convenience of study, they were added many hundreds of years after the original autographs of the Bible were written.<sup>28</sup> Usually, this is not an issue in understanding a text, but in some instances, it has caused confusion. Such is the case in the instance before us.

If the chapter division is removed, the problem is easily resolved. Without the division, the text reads, *And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles. Now when the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.*

The pronoun, *they*, in Acts 2:1, grammatically refers to its immediate antecedent, *the apostles*. This understanding also fits the description in Acts 2:14, where Peter is described as, *standing up with the eleven*, and in 2:37 the text mentions that the audience spoke to *Peter and the rest of the apostles*. Further, in Acts 1:2,4, it was the apostles whom Jesus commanded to wait in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit had come upon them.

Thus, all things considered, it must be concluded that the Holy Spirit fell only on the apostles, resulting in the phenomena described in Acts 2.

However, speaking in tongues was not and is not limited to the apostles. In Acts 10:44-48, the Holy Spirit fell on the Gentiles who heard Peter preach the Gospel, and they began to speak with tongues.

In I Corinthians 12:10 – 14:39, Paul makes many statements concerning the gifts of the spirit and states that not all, but some do speak in tongues.<sup>29</sup>

Yet, even though tongues is presented as an on-going gift present in the Church, the Pentecostal event is the only time the New Testament describes tongues of fire and the sound of a rushing mighty wind accompanying the impartation. This was a once-for-all unique experience for the original apostles.

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<sup>27</sup> Acts 2:1

<sup>28</sup> The person responsible for dividing the Bible into chapters is Stephen Langton, an Archbishop of Canterbury. Langton put the modern chapter divisions into place in around A.D. 1227. In 1551, the printer, Robert Estienne (a.k.a. Stephanus), added verse divisions to his fourth edition of the Greek New Testament. He did this while riding his horse between Paris and Lyons, France. He planned to publish his work upon arrival. He later applied these to the Hebrew Scriptures. Some jokingly suggest that his horse wobbled at some points along the way, resulting in some rather unusual verse divisions. Other printers quickly adopted Estienne's chapter and verse annotations.

<sup>29</sup> Note that in I Corinthians 12:30, writing to Spirit-filled church, Paul acknowledges that not all will speak in tongues, but will manifest other gifts of the Spirit.

### **The Crowd's Amazement Acts 2:5-13**

*Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were bewildered, because they were each one hearing them speak in his own dialect.*

*And they were amazed and marveled, saying, "Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans?"*

*And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born?*

*Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs-- we hear them in our own languages speaking of the mighty deeds of God."*

*And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, "What does this mean?"*

*But others were mocking and saying, "They are full of sweet wine."*

Some speculation is required to picture the next scene. Evidently, the apostles left their upper room and went out into the crowd that was in Jerusalem for the Passover. Otherwise, the outburst of inspired utterance would not have made the impact that it did. Whatever conclusion may be reached concerning this scene, there is no more appropriate place for it to have happened than in the outer court of the Temple. This is where would be gathered the Jews who had come to Jerusalem for Pentecost.

Members of the crowd consisted of Jews and proselytes from many regions. Gentiles were not recipients of the Gospel until the event reported in Acts 10.

Jews from many regions heard God's being praised, not only in their language, but even with a perfect dialect. The Greek term for *language*, is γλῶσσα (*glohssa*), which is used once in the passage (verse 11). The Greek term used in verse 6 and 8 is διάλεκτος (*dialektos*), indicating more than just speaking the language, but speaking it like a native speaker. This astounded the hearers, because they recognized the apostles as being from Galilee -the rural region of the nation. How could such country bumpkins have this kind of knowledge and skill?

As always, there were mockers – *these are full of new wine* – which, if that had been true, would not have explained the apostles' ability to speak flawlessly in a variety of dialects.

### **Peter's Proclamation Acts 2:14-36**

#### ***This is that 2:14-21***

*But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them:*

*"Men of Judea, and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give heed to my words. For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day; but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel:*

*'And it shall be in the last days,' God says, 'That I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all mankind; And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, And your young men shall see visions, And your old men shall dream dreams;*

*Even upon My slaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit And they shall prophesy.*

*And I will grant wonders in the sky above, And signs on the earth beneath, Blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke.*

*The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the great and glorious day of the Lord shall come.*

*And it shall be, that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'"*

Peter must have addressed the crowd in the common language of the Jewry of that era, *Aramaic*.

After his brief rebuttal of the charge of drunkenness, Peter made a statement of tremendous importance.

Joel, as was true of other Old Testament prophets, spoke of the last days. Peter declared that the *last days* had begun. Peter quoted Joel 2:28-32, and announced, *this is it!*

One characteristic of the last days, which began on Pentecost and will extend until the end of the age, is the outpouring of the Spirit on all classes of believers. Prophecy and other Spiritual manifestations are to be an accepted and expected element in these last days.

The cataclysmic cosmic phenomena described as taking place before the end of the *last days* have yet to be seen. Perhaps a foretaste of that phenomena took place when Jesus was on the cross, seven weeks prior to Pentecost. On that day, the people of Jerusalem had seen a darkening of the sun, from noon until 3 PM - *Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour.* (Matthew 27:45) However, it should be no surprise when such unexpected phenomena occur, prior to God's ringing down the curtain on this present age.

### ***The Resurrection of Jesus proclaimed 2:22-36***

*"Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—*

*this Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.*

*And God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.*

*For David says of Him,*

*'I was always beholding the Lord in my presence; For He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken. Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue exulted; Moreover my flesh also will abide in hope;*

*Because Thou wilt not abandon my soul to Hades, Nor allow Thy Holy One to undergo decay. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; Thou wilt make me full of gladness with Thy presence.'*

*Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.*

*And so, because he was a prophet, and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants upon his throne, he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay.*

*This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses.*

*Therefore, having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear.*

*For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: 'The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet.'*

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

Peter declared to the crowd that the visible and audible manifestations of the Spirit, with which they were amazed and awed, were related to Jesus the Nazarene. He reminded the crowd of the indisputable evidence of Jesus' miraculous God-given supernatural power. No doubt many in the crowd had witnessed some of Jesus' miracles.

Then, he accused them of their crime of killing this Nazarene.

However, he told them that it was a predetermined plan of God for the crucifixion to take place, even though it was done by the hands of godless men who would be held accountable for their deeds.

Then, for the first time, the resurrection was publicly declared. Only Jesus' disciples and those close to Him had witnessed the resurrection and His resurrected presence during the 40 days prior to His ascension.

Now, with the credentials of the spiritual manifestations, Peter declared the resurrection to the astonished crowd.

Peter then claimed further evidence for his assertion, Peter quoted Psalm 16:8-11, a psalm of David. All Jews held David in reverence and considered him to have been inspired by God. Peter then pointed out that David had died and his body was still in the tomb. Yet, David declared that God had promised him that one of his descendants not only would sit upon his throne but that descendant would not die and remain dead. The body of this foretold descendant of David would not die and undergo decay. David had to refer to someone other than himself, since he was dead and buried.

Peter then boldly declared that based on David's prediction, the experience of those who had seen the resurrected Lord, and credentialed by the supernatural phenomena that had just occurred, that Jesus was the fulfillment of David's prophecy.

Peter's closing remark was a horrible indictment - *Therefore, let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ-- this Jesus whom you crucified."*

### **The Call to Repentance and Immersion Acts 2:37-40**

*Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"*

*And Peter said to them, "Repent, and let each of you be immersed in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

*For the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself."*

*And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!"*

Peter's strong indictment, accompanied by the manifestations of the Holy Spirit, hit the crowd with a powerful force. Overwhelmed with a sense of guilt, they cried out, *what shall we do?*

Peter's response was very explicit and it began with the exhortation to repent. The term rendered, *repent*, is μετανοέω (*metanoēō*). The underlying meaning of this verb is, *to change one's mind*.<sup>30</sup>

In essence, Peter was challenging them to change their minds about the identity of Jesus – that He is Lord, not some rebel whom they could crucify because He defied their traditions and pointed out their hypocrisies.

The next command was to be immersed *in the name of Jesus Christ*.<sup>31</sup> The Greek terms so rendered, are ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ (*epi toh onomati*) . The preposition rendered as *in* (ἐπὶ), literally means, *upon*. Peter was instructing them to be immersed upon the authority of Jesus Christ – Jesus had commanded it and they were to do so in obedience to Jesus.

NOTE: The language of the Great Commission, *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, immersing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit*, contains a different preposition, εἰς (*eis*), which literally means, *into the name...* Jesus stated that when the apostles immersed someone, that person entered into a relationship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, when immersing someone, it is appropriate to say, *upon the authority of Jesus Christ, I immerse you into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*.

Peter stated that the reason for their being immersed was for the forgiveness of their sins.

This truth is presented several times in Scripture. For example, when Ananias confronted Saul of Tarsus, who had encountered Jesus, he said to him,

*And now why do you delay? Arise, and be immersed, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.* (Acts 22:16)

Those who consider immersion as something optional, totally disregard this important reason for being immersed. In each of the nine cases of conversion described in Acts, immersion always is the final step taken by the convert.<sup>32</sup>

Then the wonderful promise that following their immersion, they would not only receive remission of their sins, but they would enter into a relationship with God through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

This truth is of vital importance, since the guarantee that heaven belongs to an individual is verified by the fact that he/she has the Holy Spirit. Paul emphasized this truth more than once. Here are three examples:

- *\_having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, .. who is given as a pledge<sup>33</sup> of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.* (Ephesians 1:13-14)
- *Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God,<sup>who</sup> also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.* (II Corinthians 1:21-22)

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<sup>30</sup> Bauer, Gingrich, Danker, page 513

<sup>31</sup> See ADDENDUM G for comments on immersion

<sup>32</sup> See ADDENDUM D for a chart that can illustrate the pattern of salvation presented in Acts.

<sup>33</sup> The term rendered as *pledge*, is ἄρραβὼν, the term for a payment guaranteeing the completion of a contract.



- *Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge. (II Corinthians 5:5)*

Then Peter spoke another wonderful promise – not only is the promise of forgiveness of sins when one believes/repents and is immersed, followed by the gift of the Holy Spirit just for those who heard him speak – but this promise is for all future generations who would hear and respond appropriately. That being true, this is the command and the promise for present-day hearers of the Gospel.

### **The first converts under the New Testament dispensation Acts 2:41**

*So then, those who had received his word were immersed; and there were added that day about three thousand souls.*

There is no way of knowing how many were in the crowd listening to Peter, but 3000 believed and were immersed for the forgiveness of sins, the reception of the Holy Spirit, and entered into a relationship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. What a grand beginning for the church age.

### **The first Christian Church Acts 2:42-47**

*And they were continually devoting themselves to the teaching of the apostles', and to the fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers.*

*And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.*

*And all those who had believed were together, and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions, and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.*

*And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people.*

*And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.*

The four things mentioned are descriptions of what the Church did when it gathered. Indication of this is the fact that each of the four things mentioned is preceded by the definite article, *the*, which is not always indicated by most English translations (we have included this element in the above citation).

- *The teaching of the apostles* was an important element in their gathering – something similar to a sermon.
- *The fellowship* refers to the congregation, which always is a fellowship of believers (i.e. Tulsa Christian Fellowship).
- *The breaking of the bread* is a euphemism for the Lord's Supper
- *The prayers* would indicate the prayers that the congregation prayed together.

NOTE: In the future, each congregation would be led by a council of elders, but in this early stage, apostles were the church government. Even after elders were chosen, when apostles were present, they were a part of the local church government (as we will see in Acts 15)

At this point in the narrative, Luke does not give details about what the wonders and signs were that were being performed by the apostles, whether healings, casting out of spirits, or other miraculous activity, but these continual manifestations of the Holy Spirit caused awe and

reverential fear. This was in fulfillment of Jesus promise in the final moments before His ascension:

*but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." (Acts 1:8)*

Earlier, Jesus had sent the Twelve out on a preaching mission and had given them amazing supernatural power: *"Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons; freely you received, freely give. (Matthew 10:8)*

Later, when He sent out the Seventy on a preaching mission they returned with this enthusiastic report: *And the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name." (Luke 10:17)*

With the empowerment of the Holy Spirit upon them, the Twelve were demonstrating the same supernatural and miraculous signs that had been seen during these earlier preaching missions..

In an impressive sense of family and interdependency, the members of this first congregation began the practice of having a common purse. The main reason that this was needed was the presence of many who had come to Jerusalem for Pentecost, with just enough funds to care for their temporary stay. However, many seemingly remained and had no means of support and no place to live. This voluntary action of the first church is an example of how Christians should be bonded to one another.

This is the only biblical record of a church's having a common purse. It seems that the practice continued until the Jerusalem church was scattered by Saul's persecution. The first deacons were appointed because of the need for a more focused administration this fund (Acts 6:1ff).

NOTE: This was not communism in which the condition is imposed and one's personal assets are confiscated. This was an unusual situation and was a voluntary act on the part of the members of the fellowship.

To the degree that it was possible to do so, the believers spent all of their time together - *breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart...*

The definite article is missing in this description of their breaking bread – they were not breaking *the* bread, but they were breaking bread – a euphemism for having a meal.

In addition to their convivial fellowship in their homes, they also were in the Temple daily, praising God. As a result of their conduct toward one another and their devotion to God, they were looked upon with favor by the Jewish population. As a result of their conduct, many more came to Christ - daily immersions became the routine.

### **A life-long crippled healed in Jesus' Name Acts 3:1-10**

*Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer. And a certain man who had been lame from his mother's womb was being carried along, whom they used to set down every day at the gate of the temple, which is called Beautiful, in order to beg alms of those who were entering the temple.*

*And when he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he began asking to receive alms. And Peter, along with John, fixed his gaze upon him and said, "Look at us!" And he began to give them his attention, expecting to receive something from them.*

*But Peter said, "I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene-- walk!"*

*And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up; and immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened.*

*And with a leap, he stood upright and began to walk; and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.*

*And all the people saw him walking and praising God;*

*and they were taking note of him as being the one who used to sit at the Beautiful Gate of the temple to beg alms, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.*

The apostles continued to live as observant Jews. When they were in Jerusalem, they attended the established services of worship in the Temple. The two most important daily services in the Temple, were the hours of prayer that accompanied the offering of a lamb, each morning and each evening. The evening sacrifice was at 3 PM,<sup>34</sup>

Because it was the hour of prayer, there would have been a very large crowd of observant Jews in the Temple when John and Peter arrived.

As noted earlier, even though Luke wrote, concerning the post-Pentecostal activity of the apostles, *many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles*, he did not describe what these wonders and signs were. The healing of the crippled man at the gate Beautiful, is the first post-Pentecostal miracle that is described in Luke's narrative.

We might assume that the Holy Spirit orchestrated this miracle because of the certainty of its impact. It was done in such a public and undeniably supernatural manner, that the evidential/evangelistic response was immediate.

Those who habitually attended the Temple services, were accustomed to seeing this crippled panhandler. Because some had to carry him to his position before the gate, no one doubted his condition – all of the regular participants in the Temple service knew that he was not putting on an act, just to get money.

The gift that the apostles had for this man exceeded the worth of any amount of money that he could have received.

The terminology of Peter's exhortation, *In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene-- walk!*, implies that Jesus was doing the miracle.

- To do something in someone's name does not mean that there is something magic/supernatural in the pronunciation of the name,
- but rather that the action is done as if the one named were doing it.
- Something cannot be done in a person's name, unless that named person has authorized the action. To use the name otherwise, is equivalent to forgery.<sup>35 36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> The first hour of the day, coincided with our 6 AM. Therefore, the afternoon hour of prayer – the ninth hour of the day -would have been, 3 PM.

<sup>35</sup> The Gospel of John chapters 14-16 contain many statements concerning Jesus' giving believers the authority to act in His name.

<sup>36</sup> John Wimber, who had one of the most responsible healing ministries of the last century, taught that when someone came forward for prayer, the one praying should not immediately begin to

- In Scripture, the name always indicates the person whose name is cited – not just the term itself.

Peter was acting in obedience to, and upon the authority of, Jesus Christ. He was acting on behalf of Jesus.

### **A repetition of the Pentecost declaration Acts 3:11-26**

*And while he was clinging to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them at the so-called portico of Solomon, full of amazement.*

*But when Peter saw this, he replied to the people, "Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this, or why do you gaze at us, as if by our own power or piety we had made him walk?"*

*The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus, the one whom you delivered up, and disowned in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him.*

*But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you,<sup>but</sup> put to death the Prince of life, the one whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses.*

*And on the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all.*

*And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also.*

*But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He has thus fulfilled.*

*Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time.*

*Moses said, 'The Lord God shall raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren; to Him you shall give heed in everything He says to you. and it shall be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.'*

*And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward, also announced these days.*

*It is you who are the sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'*

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

Even as the Pentecostal crowd were awed by the miracle of uneducated Galileans speaking many languages with a perfect dialect – so this crowd was awed by the miraculous healing of the cripple.

Peter told the crowd to not be awed by the apostles, but by the person of Jesus, in whose name the miracle had been accomplished.

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pray – but to pause and ask God what He was/is doing in this situation and then pray according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, rather than necessarily praying for what the person was asking to be prayed for.

Peter's indictment of this crowd was identical to the one that he put upon the Pentecostal audience - that the Jews had put to death the Prince of Life. It was on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ, and empowered by Him, that the crippled man was healed.

Peter did acknowledge that they had acted in ignorance, but now, with this miracle and Peter's declaration, that time of ignorance was ended.

Citing Old Testament prophecies, Peter declared that Jesus was the fulfillment of these prophecies and that the crowd should acknowledge this and repent – i.e., *change their mind about Jesus* (again the term μετανοέω, as was used in 2:38)

In keeping with Jesus' instructions that *you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.*<sup>37</sup> Peter declared, *For you first, God raised up His Servant, and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways.*

#### **Peter and John Arrested Acts 4:1-4**

*And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the commander of the temple guard, and the Sadducees, came upon them, being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.*

*And they laid hands on them, and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening. But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.*

The commander (στρατηγός *strataygos*) of the temple guard was in charge of the Jewish soldiers who were responsible for keeping order in the Temple. No doubt the large crowd and the resulting tumult caused him to be concerned that some sort of riot might ensue.

The priests and the Sadducees had another motive. The Sadducees were the sect that controlled the Temple. They would have been disturbed because the apostles were declaring the resurrection of Jesus and the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection. The Sadducees considered the resurrection to be a doctrine of the Pharisees, their rivals for authority in Israel.

The apostles declared the resurrection of Christ was based on the apostles' personal experience, not on some tale that someone else had reported.

In spite of their arrest, many who heard their message, no doubt empowered by the Holy Spirit, came to be believers and so the male membership in the first church rose from 3000 to 5000. Since only the men are mentioned here, we do not know what the total membership, including women, would have been.<sup>38</sup>

#### **The Apostles Before the Sanhedrin Acts 4:5-17**

*And it came about on the next day, that their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem; and Annas the high priest was there, and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of high-priestly descent.*

*And when they had placed them in the center, they began to inquire, "By what power, or in what name, have you done this?"*

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<sup>37</sup> Acts 1:8

<sup>38</sup> The term Luke used is ἀνήρ (*anayr*), indicating male, rather than women or children

*Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people, if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well, let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead-- by this name this man stands here before you in good health.*

*He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the very corner stone. And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved."*

*Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John, and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were marveling, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus.*

*And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they had nothing to say in reply. But when they had ordered them to go aside out of the Council, they began to confer with one another, saying, "What shall we do with these men? For the fact that a noteworthy miracle has taken place through them is apparent to all who live in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.*

*But in order that it may not spread any further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to any man in this name."*

The Sanhedrin was the senate and supreme court of Israel, in the time of Christ. It was presided over by the High Priest and seventy others of priestly rank. Note the specific individuals mentioned as being present for the hearing.

- Annas – the senior ex-high priest
- Caiaphas – Annas son-in-law, who was the reigning high priest, having succeeded his father-in-law. Caiaphas would have been the presiding official
- John and Alexander cannot be identified with any degree of certainty, but they would have been members of the priestly family
- The elders and scribes would have included a powerful Pharisee minority

Not many weeks had passed since Annas and Caiaphas had taken part in the arrest and condemnation of Jesus.<sup>39</sup> If they had hoped to get rid of Him with His crucifixion, their hope was short-lived. It appeared that now they were going to have as much trouble because of Him as they did with Him, before His death.

When Peter and John were brought before the court, they were asked by what authority they had acted. Luke's quote of how the question was phrased, has the implication of scorn.

The emphatic *you* (ὁμεῖς *humeis*) tacked on the end of the question, indicates such scorn, since the *you* is already present in the verb, ἐποίησατε (*epoiaysate*), i.e., *you* (plural) *have done*. i.e., *By what power, or in what name, have you done this, even you?*

Jesus had instructed the apostles as to how they were to conduct themselves in such a situation.

*But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name's sake. It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony.*

*So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves; for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute. (Luke 21:12-15)*

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<sup>39</sup> Matt. 26:3, 57; Lk. 3:2; Jn. 11:49;18:13-14, 24, 28

Indeed, Jesus' promise was fulfilled. Filled and inspired by the Holy Spirit Peter made his reply. The man who had been healed was present for the hearing. Either he had been locked up overnight, with the apostles, or he had been summoned, or he chose to be present to give testimony.

Peter replied that if he and John were on trial for healing a cripple, then here is how it happened. He then spoke of the power of Jesus and pronounced the same indictment on the assembled court as he had indicted the crowd on Pentecost and the crowd in the Temple.

*Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead-- by this name this man stands here before you in good health.*

*He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the very corner stone. And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved.*

As had been true with earlier audiences, the court was amazed that such uneducated men could respond with such clarity and confidence.

The presence of the man who had been healed put the court in a difficult place – they could not deny that a notable miracle had taken place. So, the best that they could do was to warn/instruct the apostles to stop preaching in Jesus' name.

NOTE: The term rendered as *warn them* is ἀπειλησώμεθα (*apeilaysometha*), which literally means, *let us threaten them*.<sup>40</sup>

### **The Apostles Dismissed with a Caution Acts 4:18-22**

*And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.*

*But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking what we have seen and heard."*

*And when they had threatened them further, they let them go (finding no basis on which they might punish them) on account of the people, because they were all glorifying God for what had happened;*

*for the man was more than forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.*

The court ordered the apostles to be silent, but once again, no doubt at the impulse of the Holy Spirit, spoke a challenge to the court - *Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge...*

The miracle could not be denied and people who had witnessed the miracle, were an intimidating presence. Therefore, the court could only warn the apostles and release them.

### **After Being Released, The Apostles Rejoined Their Fellow Believers Acts 4:23-31**

*And when they had been released, they went to their own companions, and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them.*

*And when they heard this, they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, "O Lord, it is Thou who didst make the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them, who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David Thy servant, didst say, 'Why did the Gentiles*

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<sup>40</sup> KJV *straightly threaten them*

*rage, And the peoples devise futile things? The kings of the earth took their stand, And the rulers were gathered together Against the Lord, and against His Christ.'*

*For truly in this city there were gathered together against Thy holy servant Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Thy hand and Thy purpose predestined to occur.*

*And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Thy bond-servants may speak Thy word with all confidence, while Thou dost extend Thy hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Thy holy servant Jesus."*

*And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak the word of God with boldness.*

When Peter and John returned to the other apostles and those who were with them, the group spoke, in unison, as it were, the opening words of the Second Psalm and declared that the words had been fulfilled in the just reported experience of Peter and John.

Then, the group acknowledged that all that had happened to Jesus and to the apostles was predestined by God.

This echoes what Peter had declared in the Pentecostal sermon, and his sermon to the crowd that gathered after the healing of the lame man:

- *this Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. (Acts 2:23)*
- *"But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He has thus fulfilled. (Acts 3:18)*

It is noteworthy that the group did not ask that the threats end, or that God would protect them. They asked God to enable them to be bold in their proclamation concerning Jesus, and that Jesus, through them, would continue perform signs and wonders. This attitude continued to be demonstrated throughout this portion of the narrative.

### **The Continued Practice of a Community Treasury Acts 4:32-37**

*And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own; but all things were common property to them.*

*And with great power the apostles were giving witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all.*

*For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales and lay them at the apostles' feet; and they would be distributed to each, as any had need.*

*And Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means, Son of Encouragement), and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.*

One of Satan's most effective weapons that he uses against the church is division. He was not able to use that weapon in this first church.

The love and unity of this church is a beautiful example of how Our Lord would have the members of His Church relate to one another. Perfect unity characterized the group. The practice of a voluntary communal treasury, which had begun immediately after Pentecost (Acts



2:44), had not just been a momentary emotional response. Evidently, the practice continued until the congregation was forced to scatter, when the persecution of Saul was launched on the church.

Joseph/Barnabas was especially noted for his generosity. Perhaps Luke gave attention to Barnabas because of the important role that he was going to play, as the story progressed. Joseph must have been a man who had the Holy Spirit-given gift of encouragement, hence, since this was a Jewish congregation, he was given the Hebrew label, *bar* בַּר (son), *nabi* נָבִי (*encouragement*), which Luke, writing in Greek for world-wide audience, Hellenized as *Barnabas*.

### **The Deceit and Deaths of Ananias and Sapphira Acts 5:1-11**

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

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

*While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart?*

*You have not lied to men, but to God."*

*And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last; and great fear came upon all who heard of it.*

*And the young men arose and covered him up, and after carrying him out, they buried him.*

*Now there elapsed an interval of about three hours, and his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.*

*And Peter responded to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for such and such a price?"*

*And she said, "Yes, that was the price."*

*Then Peter said to her, "Why is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they shall carry you out as well."*

*And she fell immediately at his feet, and breathed her last; and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband.*

*And great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all who heard of these things.*

Satan, not able to cause division in the Church, did not just ignore this new body of believers. Even as he did not stop with just one assault on Jesus at the Mount of Temptation (Matthew Chapter 4; Luke Chapter 4), he came at the Church from another direction.

If he could not disrupt the entire body, he would use the generous spirit of the Church as a means of enticing at least one member to commit sin.

This incident is an illustration James 1:14-15:

*But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.*

*Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.*

James used the imagery of their being lustful ova in each person's flesh. Satan is not omniscient, but he and his demons study us and identify our particular ova, then they create situations in which that ovum is fertilized, and the result is the birth of sin.

Ananias had two ova that Satan could use:

- The desire for praise, which is the same evil motive that Jesus addressed, concerning the hypocrites who performed religious acts in order to receive praise.<sup>41</sup>
- The lust for money and not trusting in God to provide.

Luke's Greek term rendered as *kept back*, is νοσφίζομαι (*nosphizomai*) which carries the idea of *pilfered* or *misappropriated*.<sup>42</sup> The term is so rendered in the NAS Version of Titus 2:10, which commands slaves to not pilfer from their master's belongings.

The idea behind this term is that it describes the taking someone else's property.

This is the term that the Septuagint used in translating Joshua 7:1, in describing Achan's taking what God had placed under the ban, when the Israelites conquered Jericho.

- Anything of worth that was found in Jericho was to be dedicated to Yahweh and placed in Yahweh's treasury.
- No Israelite was to take any loot for himself (Joshua 6:17-19).
- When Achan took the expensive garment and the other expensive items, he was pilfering from God's goods.

When the Holy Spirit revealed to Peter what Ananias had done, Peter's rebuke clearly indicated that the Jerusalem Church did not practice communism, but that all of the sharing of possessions was voluntary. Note that the sin of Ananias was deceit. He could have indicated that what he was giving was a portion of the profit from the land, but, as Peter said, he lied *to the Holy Spirit*.

Ananias sudden death engraved on the minds of the people the importance of not deceiving God. Usually, God gives time to repent,

*The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)*

However, there are times when God's retribution is immediate.

When Sapphira arrived, three hours later, not knowing what had happened to her husband, Peter tested her. When she displayed the same deceit as her husband, she also dropped dead and those who had buried Ananias three hours previously, placed her body in the grave beside her husband.

As far as the record goes, these were the first members of the Jerusalem Church to die. The manner in which the deaths occurred caused the Church to be filled with reverential fear.

The point had been made, *Don't try to deceive God!*

## **The Apostles' Miraculous Ministry and Significant Numbers Added to the Church**

### **Acts 5:12-16**

*And at the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's portico.*

*But none of the rest dared to associate with them; however, the people held them in high esteem.*

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<sup>41</sup>Matthew 6:12ff; Luke 11:43; 14:7; 20:46-47

<sup>42</sup>Bauer, Gingrich, Danker, Pages 543-544

*And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number;*

*to such an extent that they even carried the sick out into the streets, and laid them on cots and pallets, so that when Peter came by, at least his shadow might fall on any one of them.*

*And also the people from the cities in the vicinity of Jerusalem were coming together, bringing people who were sick or afflicted with unclean spirits; and they were all being healed.*

This is the first mention of women's being among the converts.

Solomon's portico, in the Temple was the gathering place of the Jerusalem Church. The term rendered as *portico*, is *στόα* (*stoa*), which refers to a roof-covered colonnade.<sup>43</sup> According to Josephus, Solomon's portico was a double-columned porch on the east side of the Temple court. This colonnade was constructed when Herod restored the Temple. The colonnade would have been just over the Kidron Valley and near the Mount of Olives. It would have been close to the court of Gentiles.

After the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira, both saints and sinners kept a more respectful distance from the apostles. Perhaps each one felt his own unworthiness and dreaded the possibility of suffering the same fate as Ananias and Sapphira.

NOTE: Had the scandalous conduct of Ananias and Sapphira been tolerated after their exposure, as would be done in many present-day churches, the church would have been brought into disrepute. Their situation would have been similar to the hypocrites whom Jesus criticized and who were tolerated by the Jewish establishment. The addition of converts may have been difficult for a season, because of this lack of moral standards. However, the sudden punishment visited upon these two by the Lord, and the church's abhorrence of their deed, manifested by burying them without ceremony in the clothing in which they died, while their bodies were scarcely cold, communicated to the Jerusalem populace that here was a people, among whom sin and hypocrisy would not be tolerated.

This highlights the need for each church to have a current discipline procedure to be in place and implemented when open sin in the life of a member is discovered.

At this time, only the apostles, were working miracles. When the first deacons were chosen, the gift of miracles was extended to at least two of them:

- Stephen (Acts 6:8)
- Philip (Acts :13).

Later, Paul and Barnabas displayed the gift (Acts 14:3; 15:12; 19:11ff; Romans 15:19; II Corinthians 12:12). From Paul's writings it is obvious that as the Church progressed through the decades, others also possessed the gifts of healing and miracles (I Corinthians 12:9f; Galatians 3:5).

The effects of these miracles, and the probable report of what had happened to Ananias and Sapphira had the effect of bringing greatly increased numbers to belief and immersion into the Kingdom.

The description of the totally successful healing ministry of the apostles echoes the early Galilean ministry of Jesus

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, Page768

*and his fame went forth to all Syria, and they brought to him all having ailments, pressed with manifold sicknesses and pains, and demoniacs, and lunatics, and paralytics, and he healed them. (Matthew 4:24 Young's Literal Translation)*

*And while the sun was setting, all who had any sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and laying His hands on every one of them, He was healing them. And demons also were coming out of many, crying out and saying, "You are the Son of God!" And rebuking them, He would not allow them to speak, because they knew Him to be the Christ. (Luke 4:40-41)*

During this amazing season, Peter's shadow was as efficacious as had been Jesus' garment. Mark described this phenomenon concerning the miracles that resulted from touching Jesus' cloak.

*And wherever He entered villages, or cities, or countryside, they were laying the sick in the market places, and entreating Him that they might just touch the fringe of His cloak; and as many as touched it were being cured. (Mark 6:56)*

### **The Apostles Imprisoned and Released Acts 5:17-21a**

*But the high priest rose up, along with all his associates (that is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with jealousy;*

*and they laid hands on the apostles, and put them in a public jail.*

*But an angel of the Lord during the night opened the gates of the prison, and taking them out he said, "Go your way, stand and speak to the people in the temple the whole message of this Life."*

*And upon hearing this, they entered into the temple about daybreak, and began to teach.*

Peter and John had ignored the warning given by the court. They had replied, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge;<sup>for</sup> we cannot stop speaking what we have seen and heard." That is exactly what the apostles did - not only Peter and John, but all of the apostles.

The Chief Priests, and the Sadducees who controlled the Temple, were angry because the apostles had ignored the council's warning, and also because the Temple hierarchy was jealous of the apostles' popularity. For the second time, in an effort to put an end to the apostles' ministry, the Chief Priest and his associates had the apostles arrested and put in jail. The plan was for them to be brought before the council once again, the next morning.

However, God had other plans. During the night an angel freed the apostles and they immediately returned to the Temple and continued to teach and declare the Gospel.

### **The Apostles Rearrested Acts 5:21b-26**

*Now when the high priest and his associates had come, they called the Council together, even all the Senate of the sons of Israel, and sent orders to the prison house for them to be brought.*

*But the officers who came did not find them in the prison; and they returned, and reported back, saying,*

*"We found the prison house locked quite securely and the guards standing at the doors; but when we had opened up, we found no one inside."*

*Now when the captain of the temple guard and the chief priests heard these words, they were greatly perplexed about them as to what would come of this.*

*But someone came and reported to them, "Behold, the men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!"*

*Then the captain went along with the officers and proceeded to bring them back without violence (for they were afraid of the people, lest they should be stoned).*

When morning dawned, a special meeting of the Sanhedrin was called in order to deal with these rebellious apostles. However, when the officers went to the prison they found an inexplicable situation. The doors were locked securely, and the guards were at the doors, but the prison was empty! How could that be! No doubt a degree of fear must have entered their hearts.

Then the report came that the apostles were back preaching and teaching. For the third time, the apostles were arrested.

An important element in the narrative is the fact that the apostles had the favor of the people. Because the arresting officers were afraid of the people they rather gingerly conducted the arrest.

The apostles set the example as to how one should conduct himself in such a situation. Because the people were on the side of the apostles, the apostles could have called for the people to begin a riot and no doubt a riot would have ensued. However, they did not do this. They conducted themselves with respectful decorum and allowed themselves to be arrested without protest. They modeled respect for governmental authority and order in society.

### **The High Priest's Charge and the Apostles' Reply Acts 5:27-32**

*And when they had brought them, they stood them before the Council.*

*And the high priest questioned them, saying, "We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and behold, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us."*

*But Peter and the apostles answered and said, "We must obey God rather than men.*

*The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross.*

*He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.*

*And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him."*

The High Priest charged the apostles with trying to place upon the Jewish leaders the blame for Jesus' death.

Peter, no doubt the spokesman for all of the apostles, said, "That is exactly what you did, *Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross.*

Once again, Peter and the apostles declared that the command of Christ was/is of more importance than the ruling and declaration of any court. They gave the same reply that Peter had given in his first arrest, *We must obey God rather than men.* This example should be a guide to all Christians concerning both the importance of honoring civil authorities, and yet giving more honor to the commands of God.

Once again, Peter declared that the gift of the Holy Spirit is given to all who in obedience, come to Christ.

### **At the Persuasion of a Rabbi, The Council Chooses to Flog the Apostles, Rather than Slay them Acts 5:33-42**

*But when they heard this, they were cut to the quick and were intending to slay them.*

*But a certain Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the Law, respected by all the people, stood up in the Council and gave orders to put the men outside for a short time.*

*And he said to them, "Men of Israel, take care what you propose to do with these men. For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody; and a group of about four hundred men*

*joined up with him. And he was slain; and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing.*

*After this man Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census, and drew away some people after him, he too perished, and all those who followed him were scattered.*

*And so in the present case, I say to you, stay away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or action should be of men, it will be overthrown;*

*but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them; or else you may even be found fighting against God."*

*And they took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them to speak no more in the name of Jesus, and then released them.*

*So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name.*

*And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.*

Gamaliel is the rabbi under whom Saul of Tarsus was educated and trained.(Acts 22:3). It also is a long-held tradition that both Stephen and Barnabas were educated under Gamaliel's tutelage, but there is no biblical evidence for this tradition. He obviously was a thoughtful and moderate man – not inclined to go along with furious measures.

Gamaliel cites two instances of seditious activity that came to naught, because it was not of God. He argued that if the action of the apostles were merely of human origin, it would not last long and would die out.

However, if their actions were from God, the council could be opposing God – a serious infraction.

Gamaliel's wise restraining word prevailed and so they abstained from killing the apostles. However, they had to vent their anger in some manner, therefore, as was done in the synagogues, they stripped them and whipped them. Because the Mosaic Law prohibited lashing someone more than forty times,<sup>44</sup> the custom was to inflict thirty-nine lashes, in case the executioner had miscounted.<sup>45</sup> After this ignominious punishment, the council ordered them to no longer speak about Jesus.

The response of the apostles is noteworthy:

- They did not ask God to rain down punishment on the council.
- They rejoiced that they had been able to suffer pain and shame for Jesus.
- They went right on preaching and teaching that Jesus is the Christ.

### **Satan's second foiled attempt to bring division in the Church and the Continued Growth of the Church Acts 6:1-7**

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

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<sup>44</sup> Deuteronomy 25:2-3

<sup>45</sup> Paul stated that five times he was lased thirty-nine times because of his preaching the Gospel (II Corinthians 11:24)

*And the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said,*

*"It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. But select from among you, brethren, seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task.*

*But we will devote ourselves to prayer, and to the ministry of the word."*

*And the statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch.*

*And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them.*

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

Here is another example of Satan's relentless efforts to use his most effective weapon against the Church – division in the body. Once again, as he had done with Ananias, he attempted to use the common purse, what was born in mutual love among the members. This time, he used the diverse ethnicity of the members of the Church.

Hellenistic Jews were those who were from the Greek-speaking world outside of Israel. These would have been among those who had come for Pentecost and remained, as a part of the Jerusalem Church.

There seems to have been some basis for the complaint of the Hellenistic Jews – evidently their widows really were being overlooked in daily distribution of food. The funds that were given were *laid at the apostles' feet*, and so the primary responsibility for the use of the funds would have belonged to the apostles. Note that the apostles did not defend themselves against this charge. Their response was, "Let's find a solution."

Because the primary ministry of the apostles was preaching, accompanied by prayer, they did not want the management of the funds and the distribution of food to pull them away from that role.

Because of the basis of the embryonic division, and how human nature tends to be ethnically discriminating, the task was one of great sensitivity. Therefore, the apostles wanted the congregation to pick the men who would become the overseers of the task. These new managers had to be men that the congregation trusted and respected. They instructed the congregation to pick seven men for the task.

The qualifications required of these men was that they were:

- of good reputation
- full of the Holy Spirit
- men of wisdom.

The congregation showed sensitivity to the situation by choosing men who were not native Palestinians. All of them had Greek names. They were Hellenistic Jews.

Two of these men, Stephen and Philip, played a major role in the ongoing narrative of the early Church.

The terms describing the role of these men are *διακονεῖν τραπέζης* (*diakonein trapezeis*), i.e., *to serve tables*. The verb, *διακονέω* (*diakoneo*) is the word from which is derived the noun

διάκονος (*diakonos*), which has been anglicized as *deacon*. The noun simply means, *servant*, which came to be recognized as an office in the church.<sup>46</sup>

After ordaining these men as the first deacons of the Church, the apostles continued in their preaching ministry and the Church in Jerusalem greatly increased in number. Of special significance is the fact even many priests were becoming obedient to the faith.

### **Stephen's Arrest Acts 6:8-15**

*And Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people.*

*But some men from what was called the Synagogue of the Freedmen, including both Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and some from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and argued with Stephen.*

*And yet they were unable to cope with the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking.*

*Then they secretly induced men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God."*

*And they stirred up the people, the elders and the scribes, and they came upon him and dragged him away, and brought him before the Council.*

*And they put forward false witnesses who said, "This man incessantly speaks against this holy place, and the Law; for we have heard him say that this Nazarene, Jesus, will destroy this place and alter the customs which Moses handed down to us."*

*And fixing their gaze on him, all who were sitting in the Council saw his face like the face of an angel.*

As noted earlier, when Jesus sent out the seventy on their preaching mission, they experienced supernatural activity to validate their message. After Pentecost, only the apostles had manifested this ministry of performing *signs and wonders*. Stephen's ministry in the Hellenistic synagogue, is the first post-Pentecostal account of someone, other than the apostles performing

Rather than preaching in the Temple, Stephen began to expound his teaching about the Gospel in one of the Jerusalem synagogues. There were many synagogues in Jerusalem and this one was a synagogue that was attended by Hellenistic Jews.

Note that some who attended this synagogue were from Cilicia. This was the synagogue that Saul/Paul would have attended, since he was from Tarsus, the principal city of Cilicia. Saul's participation in the stoning of Stephen verifies his presence in this synagogue.

In spite of the supernatural activity that credentialed Stephen's preaching, men from the synagogue began to argue with Stephen. This dispute would have been in public, because Stephen's opponents were trying to discredit him. One wonders if Saul may have been one of those arguing with Stephen.

In all of the instances of the apostles' being arrested and put on trial, they followed the instructions of Jesus, as to how they should conduct themselves. The Holy Spirit imparted wisdom had defeated their accusers at every turn.

*But when they deliver you up, do not become anxious about how or what you will speak; for it shall be given you in that hour what you are to speak. (Matthew 10:19; Mark 3:11; Luke 12:11)*

Stephen displayed the same conduct as was displayed by the apostles.

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<sup>46</sup> Philippians 1:1; I Timothy 3:8, 12



Stephen also displayed the attitude of those in the prayer meeting, following the apostles' release from prison (Acts 4:29-31) – not asking that persecution stop or that God reign down damnation on the persecutors, but he displayed boldness in the face of his persecutors.

Being unable to defeat Stephen in honest debate, his opponents resorted to a common maneuver – employing dishonest witnesses who are willing to lie. These false witnesses caused the entire synagogue to rise up and haul Stephen before the Sanhedrin.

As Stephen stood before the council, his demeanor did not display fear or intimidation. Rather, his face was glowing, as one who consciously stood in the presence of God. Although Luke does not state that Stephen was filled with the Holy Spirit, as he faced his judges – as he had stated concerning Peter when he made his defense earlier before the same court (4:8) – the description certainly implies that such was the case.

### **The High Priest's Question Acts 7:1**

*And the high priest said, "Are these things so?"*

The high priest probably was Caiaphas, the same high priest who had presided at Jesus' trial.<sup>47</sup> He remained in this office until 36 AD.

It was necessary in the Jewish court for the accused person to know the charges against him and to have the opportunity to reply to them.

### **Stephen's Reply Acts 7:2-53**

An item of significant interest is the fact that Luke was not present for Stephen's trial. It is somewhat startling that he was able to record this lengthy speech. Only the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) exceeds the length of Stephen's speech. Paul probably described the scene to Luke, but surely Paul did not remember word for word what Stephen had spoken. We assume that the Holy Spirit gave Luke the details of Stephen's speech.

Note that Stephen's reply is not a defense, but it is an indictment of the Jewish establishment.

Stephen's reply is quite lengthy. We will divide it into the seven sections that naturally occur in the discourse.

#### **A. The Patriarchal Age 7:2-8**

*And he said, "Hear me, brethren and fathers! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran,<sup>3</sup> and said to him, 'Depart from your country and your relatives, and come into the land that I will show you.'*

*Then he departed from the land of the Chaldeans, and settled in Haran.*

*And from there, after his father died, God removed him into this country in which you are now living.*

*And He gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot of ground; and yet, even when he had no child, He promised that He would give it to him as a possession, and to his offspring after him.*

*But God spoke to this effect, that his offspring would be aliens in a foreign land, and that they would be enslaved and mistreated for four hundred years.<sup>7</sup>*

*And whatever nation to which they shall be in bondage I Myself will judge,' said God, 'and after that they will come out and serve Me in this place.'*

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<sup>47</sup> Matt. 26:3, 57; John 18:13-14, 24, 28

*And He gave him the covenant of circumcision; and so Abraham became the father of Isaac, and circumcised him on the eighth day; and Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob of the twelve patriarchs.*

How Stephen began his speech is significant - *brethren and fathers - our father Abraham*. This beginning statement:

- Was respectful of those in authority
- Identified Stephen as being of the same spiritual family as his audience.

A major theme of the entire speech is that God's presence is not limited to any land or any particular building. This was a response to the charge *This man incessantly speaks against this holy place*

- God appeared to Abraham in Mesopotamia
- God directed Abraham in Haran and directed him to go to Palestine
- Even though God promised Abraham that his descendants would inherit Palestine, He did not give Abraham even a foot of ground in Palestine.
- God was with Joseph in Egypt.
- God gave his Law to the people of Israel, through Moses, when they were in the wilderness.
- The moveable tent that the people had in wilderness was a more fitting shrine for the Divine Presence, than any permanent building, such as the Temple built by Solomon

Another theme is that the refusal to recognize Jesus as the Messiah mirrors Israel's oft-repeated attitude toward God's messengers.

- Joseph's brothers hated him, even though he was God's predestined agent to deliver them.
- Moses was repudiated more than once, by the Israelites.
- Prophets were resisted and killed by those to whom God sent them.
- Jesus, whom the prophets and foretold and identified was killed by those to whom His saving message was first proclaimed.

In all of these situations, the one sign of the covenant between God and Abraham, as well as his descendants was circumcision. Abraham's circumcision of his sons was evidence of his faith in God's promises.

## **B. Israel in Egypt Acts 7:9-19**

*And the patriarchs became jealous of Joseph and sold him into Egypt. And yet God was with him, and rescued him from all his afflictions, and granted him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh, king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his household.*

*Now a famine came over all Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction with it; and our fathers could find no food.*

*But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent our fathers there the first time. And on the second visit Joseph made himself known to his brothers, and Joseph's family was disclosed to Pharaoh.*

*And Joseph sent word and invited Jacob his father and all his relatives to come to him, seventy-five persons in all.*

*And Jacob went down to Egypt and there passed away, he and our fathers.*

*And from there they were removed to Shechem, and laid in the tomb which Abraham had purchased for a sum of money from the sons of Hamor in Shechem.*

*But as the time of the promise was approaching which God had assured to Abraham, the people increased and multiplied in Egypt, until there arose another king over Egypt who knew nothing about Joseph.*

*It was he who took shrewd advantage of our race, and mistreated our fathers so that they would expose their infants and they would not survive.*

As early as the patriarchal age, beginning with Joseph's brothers, the pattern of opposing God's chosen instruments was displayed,. Yet, God superintended everything, as He moved toward the fulfillment of the promise given to Abraham in Mesopotamia. The ultimate fulfillment was the coming of the Messiah – Jesus.

### C. Moses' early days Acts 7:20-29

*And it was at this time that Moses was born; and he was lovely in the sight of God; and he was nurtured three months in his father's home.*

*And after he had been exposed, Pharaoh's daughter took him away, and nurtured him as her own son. And Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, and he was a man of power in words and deeds.*

*But when he was approaching the age of forty, it entered his mind to visit his brethren, the sons of Israel.*

*And when he saw one of them being treated unjustly, he defended him and took vengeance for the oppressed by striking down the Egyptian. And he supposed that his brethren understood that God was granting them deliverance through him; but they did not understand.*

*And on the following day he appeared to them as they were fighting together, and he tried to reconcile them in peace, saying, 'Men, you are brethren, why do you injure one another?'*

*But the one who was injuring his neighbor pushed him away, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and judge over us? 'You do not mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday, do you?'*

*And at this remark Moses fled, and became an alien in the land of Midian, where he became the father of two sons.*

Pharaoh ordered that every male baby born to the Israelites was to be immediately thrown into the Nile River.<sup>48</sup> Moses' parents defied that order and kept the baby as a secret for three months. When the baby reached that age, they realized that they could no longer keep his birth a secret. When they finally did put him into the river, it was done in such a manner to result in his rescue.

For forty years, Moses lived as an Egyptian, in the royal household – the adopted son of the Pharaoh's daughter. He received the best education that a royal son could receive. Even so, he did not lose the awareness of his true identity – an Israelite.

God is not asleep and as a result Moses began to identify with God's chosen people. When he sought to act as their deliverer, as was true in the other instances that Stephen cited, the Israelites did not accept him, but resisted him.

In fear that Pharaoh might get word of his action and think that Moses was inciting a slave rebellion, Moses fled to northwest Arabia. He, like Abraham, became a sojourner in a foreign land – a fact which he acknowledged in the name he gave to his first-born son, Gershom (i.e., a sojourner there).

### D. The call of Moses Acts 7:30-34

*And after forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in the flame of a burning thorn bush.*

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<sup>48</sup> Exodus 1:22

*And when Moses saw it, he began to marvel at the sight; and as he approached to look more closely, there came the voice of the Lord:*

*'I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.' And Moses shook with fear and would not venture to look.*

*But the Lord said to him, 'Take off the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground. I have certainly seen the oppression of My people in Egypt, and have heard their groans, and I have come down to deliver them; come now, and I will send you to Egypt.'*

Moses' exile was a part of the divine plan. It was there, in northwest Arabia, *in the wilderness of Mount Sinai*, that God began the next chapter in fulfilling His plan of redemption through Christ. God had not forgotten his promise to Abraham and his descendants.

The place is called, *holy ground*, because of the Divine presence.

#### **E. The wilderness wanderings Acts 7:35-43**

*This Moses whom they disowned, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge?' is the one whom God sent to be both a ruler and a deliverer with the help of the angel who appeared to him in the thorn bush.*

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

*This is the Moses who said to the sons of Israel, 'God shall raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren.'*

*This is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness together with the angel who was speaking to him on Mount Sinai, and who was with our fathers; and he received living oracles to pass on to you.*

*And our fathers were unwilling to be obedient to him, but repudiated him and in their hearts turned back to Egypt, saying to Aaron, 'Make for us gods who will go before us; for this Moses who led us out of the land of Egypt-- we do not know what happened to him.'*

*And at that time they made a calf and brought a sacrifice to the idol, and were rejoicing in the works of their hands.*

*But God turned away and delivered them up to serve the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, 'It was not to Me that you offered victims and sacrifices forty years in the wilderness, was it, O house of Israel? You also took along the tabernacle of Moloch and the star of the god Rompha, the images which you made to worship them. I also will remove you beyond Babylon.'*

Stephen launches deeper into the illustration of how Israel consistently rejected God's chosen agent, and even by resorting to idolatry, rejecting God Himself.

Moses indicated that he was a forerunner of Jesus in that he stated, *God shall raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren*. God performed mighty miracles through Moses, and Jesus, the prophet like Moses, also was known for the amazing miracles that He performed. No one in Jerusalem could deny this, as was stated by Peter on Pentecost,

*"Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know--"<sup>49</sup>*

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<sup>49</sup> Acts 2:22

Stephen quotes the Septuagint version of Amos 5:25-27, *as it is written in the book of the prophets*. The Septuagint was a Greek version of the Old Testament & his audience consisted of Hellenistic (Greek speaking) Jews

God promised that he would, in time, give the Israelites over to the Babylonians, because of their ongoing unfaithfulness.

#### F. The Tabernacle and the Temple Acts 7:44-50

*Our fathers had the tent of testimony in the wilderness, just as He who spoke to Moses directed him to make it according to the pattern which he had seen.*

*And having received it in their turn, our fathers brought it in with Joshua upon dispossessing the nations whom God drove out before our fathers, until the time of David.*

*And David found favor in God's sight, and asked that he might find a dwelling place for the God of Jacob. But it was Solomon who built a house for Him.*

*However, the Most High does not dwell in houses made by human hands;*

*as the prophet says: 'Heaven is My throne, And earth is the footstool of My feet; What kind of house will you build for Me?' says the Lord; 'Or what place is there for My repose? Was it not My hand which made all these things?'*

Stephen then turned to the charge of blasphemy against God – blasphemy against God's dwelling place, the Temple.

Again, quoting from the prophets, cites the opening words of Isaiah 66, that God does not dwell in houses made by man.

Stephen's argument has reached its conclusion and now he begins to drive it home.

#### G. Personal application Acts 7:51-53

*You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did.*

*Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute?*

*And they killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become;*

*you who received the law as ordained by angels, and yet did not keep it.*

There was nothing to add after his citation of Isaiah 66:1-2. He had clinched the case.

The description, *stiff-necked*, was appropriate for the nation from the wilderness onward. God Himself had made that complaint.

*For the LORD had said to Moses, "Say to the sons of Israel, 'You are an obstinate people; should I go up in your midst for one moment, I would destroy you. Now therefore, put off your ornaments from you, that I may know what I will do with you.'" (Exodus 33:5)*

There are ample examples of the prophets being persecuted, not only in the canonical books of the Old Testament, but also in Jewish tradition

For example, the tradition that Isaiah was sawn asunder by a wooden saw, during reign of Manasseh (this probably is the episode mentioned in Hebrews 11:37) and that Jeremiah was stoned by the people who forced him to go to Egypt.

Most of the people's anger against the prophets was the result of the prophets' attacks on their perverted notions of the worship of God – even as Jesus criticized those who performed religious actions for the praise of men.<sup>50</sup>

Stephen concluded by stating that his accusers were no different than those who, throughout Jewish history, had persecuted God's messengers, in that they had killed the very one about whom the prophets spoken.

### **Stephen's final witness and martyrdom Acts 7:54-60; 8:1a**

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

*But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God;*

*and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.*

*But they cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears, and they rushed upon him with one impulse. And when they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him, and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul.*

*And they went on stoning Stephen as he called upon the Lord and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!"*

*And falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" And having said this, he fell asleep.*

*And Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death.*

In spite of the visual expressions of anger and hatred, Stephen showed no fear. As he stood calmly and courageously before the court, he was filled with the Holy Spirit, and he experienced a wonderful vision of Jesus, standing at the right hand of God. Maintaining a beautiful spirit, he prayed the same prayer that Jesus had prayed on the cross.

- Jesus: *But Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23:34)*
- Stephen: *Lord, do not hold this sin against them! (Acts 8:60)*

In the three previous arrests and trials, the apostles had been released. Such was not the case with Stephen. Jesus did not move to stop the execution, but after giving Stephen a heavenly vision of His Presence, He allowed Stephen to be executed.

The expression, *he fell asleep*, often is used in Scripture to describe death.<sup>51</sup> In this narrative it seems to indicate that Stephen quickly expired, rather than enduring the long, drawn-out, painful death of stoning.

This is the first mention of Saul/Paul in the narrative.

- *And when they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him, and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul.*
- *And Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death.*

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<sup>50</sup> Matthew 6:5-6, etc.

<sup>51</sup> Daniel 12:2; Matthew 27:52; John 11:11-13; Acts 13:36; I Corinthians 15:6, 18, 20; I Thessalonians 4:13ff; II Peter 3:4

The term that describes Saul's *hearty agreement* is *συνευδοκέω* (*suneudokeoh*), which indicates, *he consented with delight*. He fed his eyes on the bloody spectacle, hoping that it would put an end to the spread of Christianity.

Years later, when Saul of Tarsus had become the apostle, Paul, a group of Jews from Asia stirred up a mob against Paul. Paul responded by telling his life story. He began his defense by describing his behavior before his encounter with Christ.,

*"And I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons, (Acts 22:4)*

Later, in his defense before Agrippa, Paul said that, before his encounter with Christ, when Christians were on trial, he always voted for the death penalty.

*"And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them. (Acts 26:10)*

### **The Persecution Results in the Spread of the Gospel Acts 8:1b-8**

*And on that day a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.*

*And some devout men buried Stephen and made loud lamentation over him.*

*But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house; and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.*

*Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word.*

*And Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them.*

*And the multitudes with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing.*

*For in the case of many who had unclean spirits, they were coming out of them shouting with a loud voice; and many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed.*

*And there was much rejoicing in that city.*

Prior to the rising persecution, the church had been confined to Jerusalem. The persecution produced the first fulfillment of Jesus' declaration,

*but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." (Acts 1:8)*

Before they fled the city, some devout men buried Stephen. Even though Stephen's death was of great benefit to Stephen, because of the reward that awaited him, the Church grieved over this good man's martyrdom.

When the members of the Jerusalem Church fled the city into surrounding regions, the apostles remained in Jerusalem. It is not unreasonable to assume that the Holy Spirit had directed them to do this. Based on the ongoing narrative, it seems that for a season, they were exempt from the persecution launched against the Jerusalem Church.

Philip, another of the seven deacons, went to the city of Samaria. The province of Samaria was inhabited by half-breed Jews. The origin of the Samaritans goes back to the unwise actions of Solomon's son, Rehoboam, in the Tenth Century BC. When Rehoboam became king, Jeroboam and representatives of the ten northern tribes, asked Rehoboam to reduce the heavy burden of taxes and other demands that his father, Solomon, had imposed upon them.

Rehoboam sought the counsel of older men who advised him to heed this request and to lighten the load on the people.

Rehoboam then turned to his young advisers, who took the position that since he was king, he should ignore the request and even put heavier burdens on the people. In response to his young advisers, Rehoboam haughtily told Jeroboam and the delegates from the north,

*and he spoke to them according to the advice of the young men, saying, "My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions." (1 Kings 12:14)*

Reacting to Rehoboam's harsh response, Jeroboam led the ten northern tribes to rebel against Rehoboam.<sup>52</sup>

The outcome of this exchange was the splitting the nation into two kingdoms: the northern kingdom of Israel (which after some years became known as, *Samaria*) and the southern kingdom of Judah (consisting of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin).

Jeroboam feared that if the Samaritans journeyed to Jerusalem to worship at the Temple, the separation between the Jews and Samaritans would be threatened.

In order to make certain that the two kingdoms remained separated, Jeroboam created idols for the northern kingdom to worship at two sites in Samaria.

*"If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will return to their lord, even to Rehoboam king of Judah; and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah."*

*So the king consulted, and made two golden calves, and he said to them, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem; behold your gods, O Israel, that brought you up from the land of Egypt."*

*And he set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. Now this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one as far as Dan.*

*And he made houses on high places, and made priests from among all the people who were not of the sons of Levi.*

*And Jeroboam instituted a feast in the eighth month on the fifteenth day of the month, like the feast which is in Judah, and he went up to the altar; thus he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves which he had made. And he stationed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made.*

*Then he went up to the altar which he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised in his own heart; and he instituted a feast for the sons of Israel, and went up to the altar to burn incense. (1 Kings 12:27-33)*

In addition to their worship of these idols, the citizens of the northern kingdom continued to worship Yahweh.

In time, the northern kingdom, Israel, became so idolatrous that in 721 B.C., God allowed Assyria to conquer the northern kingdom.

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<sup>52</sup> 1 Kings 12:1-20



Many Israelites were taken to Assyria as captive exiles, but some Israelites remained in the land and intermarried with the foreigners planted there by the Assyrians. These half-Jewish, half-Gentile people became known as the Samaritans. Their capitol was the city of Samaria. (See ADDENDUM F for Samaria's geographical relationship to Judah).

The Samaritans erected a temple on their sacred hill, Mt. Gerizim, in c.450 BC.

**EXCURSIS**  
**Mount Gerizim**

Although Moses died before the Israelites entered the Promised Land, he instructed them to perform ceremonies of blessings on Mount Gerizim, when they first entered the Promised Land. (Deuteronomy 11:29-30)

After the division of the kingdom, Samaritans put forth the belief that Mt. Gerizim, rather than Jerusalem's Temple Mount was the location chosen by Yahweh for a holy temple. In Samaritan tradition, Mt. Gerizim it is considered to be the oldest and most central mountain in the world, and was the mountain that provided the first solid ground for Noah's disembarkation after the flood..

Samaritans also believe that Mount Gerizim is the mountain on which Abraham almost sacrificed his son Isaac. Jews, on the other hand, consider the location of the near-sacrifice to be Mount Moriah, which they identify as the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

Mount Gerizim continues to be the center of Samaritan religion. Samaritans still ascend the mount three times a year to celebrate the Mosaic feasts of Passover, Shavuot and Sukkot. They keep the Passover as Moses instructed, with a lamb sacrifice offered, but offered on Mount Gerizim, rather than the Jerusalem Temple.

The temple on Gerizim was destroyed by the Hasmonaean ruler, John Hyrcanus (134-104 BC), when he conquered Samaria and added it to his realm. Even without their temple, the Samaritans still considered Gerizim to be a sacred mountain and do so, even in our present era.

John 4:3ff describes Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well of Samaria. She said to Him, *"Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."* (John 4:20)

The Jews despised the Samaritans because of their syncretistic worship and their being only half-breed Jews.

In spite of their syncretistic worship, the Samaritans revered the Old Testament, and they shared the same hope that was held by the Jews – a coming prophet like Moses, based on Moses' speech as recorded in Deuteronomy 18:15-19

*Yahweh your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him.*

*This is according to all that you asked of Yahweh your God in Horeb on the day of the assembly, saying, 'Let me not hear again the voice of Yahweh my God, let me not see this great fire anymore, lest I die.'*

*And Yahweh said to me, 'They have spoken well. I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.*

*'And it shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him.*

Philip was able to build on this hope.

As noted earlier, following Pentecost, the only miraculous works were done through the apostles, until Stephen's miraculous ministry in the Hellenistic synagogue Philip was the second person after the apostles to be used of God in the performance of miracles.

As was true in the earlier display of miracles, both casting out of demons and healing the sick, this gift were instruments of evangelism. Miracles not only gained the attention of the audience, but also validated the message.

The people of Samaria were overjoyed by this miraculous ministry, and they gave heed to Philip's gospel message.

*And the multitudes with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing.*

The term rendered as *multitudes*, is οἱ ὄχλοι (*hoi ochloi*). This term usually refers to the common masses, rather than the aristocracy.<sup>53</sup> No one was disputing what Philip was saying, because of the indisputable evidence of miracles.

### **Simon the Magician believes and along with other Samaritans, was immersed Acts 8:9-13**

*Now there was a certain man named Simon, who formerly was practicing magic in the city, and astonishing the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone great; and they all, from smallest to greatest, were giving attention to him, saying, "This man is what is called the Great Power of God."*

*And they were giving him attention because he had for a long time astonished them with his magic arts.*

*But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being immersed, men and women alike.*

*And even Simon himself believed; and after being immersed, he continued on with Philip; and as he observed signs and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed.*

The Greek term rendered as, *great*, in verse 9, is the accusative masculine singular of μέγας (*megas*), meaning, *great*. Because of this, some have labelled this man, *Simon Magus* and he often is referred to by that name in various writings. Many traditions about Simon Magus developed in later literature. Some of these claim that he was the instigator of the heresy of Gnosticism in the early church. Whether he was deceiving the people with trickery or perhaps performing wonders by some satanic spirit, is a matter of speculation.

Not only were the people of Samaria convinced of Philip's message, but Simon quickly realized the difference between his magic and the miraculous wonders being performed by Philip.

In response to his message, Philip immersed great numbers, including the magician, Simon.

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<sup>53</sup> Barbara & MFN Freiberg, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Bloomington, Indiana, Trafford Publishing) 2006, entry 20203

### **The Samaritans receive the Holy Spirit Acts 8:14-17**

*Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been immersed in the name of the Lord Jesus.*

*Then they began laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit.*

Turn to ADDENDUM D and complete the column related to the Samaritans

Matthew 16:13-19 provides important background information concerning the visit of Peter and John to Samaria.

*Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He began asking His disciples, saying, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"*

*And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets."*

*He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"*

*And Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."*

*And Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.*

*And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it.*

*I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."*

Recall that Jesus spoke Aramaic. In Aramaic, there is only one word for *stone*. That word is *kephas*. Therefore, using Aramaic, Jesus said, *I also say to you that you are Kephass, and upon this Kephass I will build My church.*

Matthew witnessed this scene and so, when he quoted Jesus, he sought to convey exactly what Jesus said. Since Matthew wrote his gospel account in Greek, he was able to do that. He used two different Greek terms to distinguish between what Jesus said to Simon and what He said about the rock on which He would build His church.

The term that he used for Simon, was πέτρος (*petros*), which is the masculine singular of the term meaning, *stone*.

When he referred to the foundation of the Church, he used the term, πέτρα (*petra*), feminine singular of the term, meaning *bed rock*.<sup>54</sup>

So, it seems that Jesus pointed to Simon and said, you are *Kephass*. Then, pointing to Himself, he said, upon this *Kephass*, I will build my Church.

Therefore, to distinguish the difference between what Jesus said to Simon and what He said about the foundation of the Church, Matthew used two different Greek words – one referring to a stone and another referring to bed rock.

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<sup>54</sup>Freiberg, Entry 21794

Relevant to the episode in Samaria, is the statement, *I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*

The *you* in this statement is second person singular. Therefore, Jesus did not give this promise to all of the apostles, but only to Simon. In essence, He said, *I give to you, Simon, the keys of the kingdom of heaven.....*

It is of note that

- Peter unlocked heaven for the Jews on Pentecost (Acts 2)
- Peter unlocked heaven for the half-breed Jews in Samaria (Acts 8)
- Peter unlocked heaven for the Gentiles in Caesarea (Acts 10)

In each of these instances, the Holy Spirit was promised and imparted to these specific groups through Peter.

The presence of the Holy Spirit in the believer is both evidence and guarantee of his salvation. This truth is presented in several New Testament passages. For example,

*who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.* (II Corinthians 1:22)

- The *seal*, refers to an image stamped on a document, usually the impression of a person's signet ring impressed into wax on the document, that guarantees that it the document is from the person designated as the author and is a guarantee of the promises found in the document.
- The term rendered as *pledge* (NAS), *ownership* (NIV), *earnest* (KJV), is ἀρραβῶν (*arrabown*), meaning *an advance transaction that guarantees the fulfillment of the contract.*<sup>55</sup>

This truth is also presented in:

- *The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,* (Romans 8:16)
- *Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge.* (2 Corinthians 5:5)
- *In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation--having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.* (Ephesians 1:13-14)

NOTE: Even though this special role is given to Peter, the fact that the apostles in Jerusalem *sent them Peter and John*, indicates that Peter was subject to the other apostles. He did not have the primacy that is accorded to the Papacy.

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<sup>55</sup> Freiberg entry 3642

**EXCURSUS**  
**Binding and Loosing**

A comment must be made on the promise to Simon, *whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*

The terms rendered as *shall bind* and *shall loose*, are periphrastic, future, perfect verbs.<sup>56</sup> Literally, Jesus said, *shall already have been bound*, and *shall already have been loosed*.

Thus, Simon could not go around binding and loosing and heaven had to honor his actions. He could only bind and loose what heaven had already declared bound and loosed. Simon was to be the agent for achieving the binding and loosing that heaven had decreed.<sup>57</sup>

This is similar to a judge's issuing an eviction order, but the occupant of the property is not evicted when the order is given. The occupant is evicted when the sheriff shows up and evicts the occupant.

The terminology, *For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been immersed in the name of the Lord Jesus*, implies more than the customary reception of the Holy Spirit that one receives in immersion. From the response of Simon, the magician, it is obvious that some external manifestation took place.

Interestingly, only here and in the episode concerning the Ephesian disciples who needed convincing that there is a Holy Spirit (Acts 19:1-7), is there an account of individuals' receiving the Holy Spirit, with outward manifestations, through the laying on of hands. In both of these accounts it is apostles who laid hands on the recipients.

It also is noteworthy, that in Paul's list of the gifts of the Spirit, recorded in I Corinthians 12:1-11, the laying on of hands for the impartation of the Holy Spirit is not mentioned.

Since the normal pattern is for individuals to receive the indwelling Holy Spirit at immersion, we have to conclude that when something happens to break the normal pattern, there is a reason for breaking the pattern. Sometimes, that reason is clear, such as when the Holy Spirit fell on the Gentiles in Acts 10. The event in Acts 10 was necessary to convince the Jewish leaders of the church at Jerusalem that the Gospel was for Gentiles as well as Jews (we will examine that episode fully when we get to chapter 10).

What could have been the reason for breaking the pattern in Samaria?

It is important to remember that there was great animosity between the Jews and Samaritans. Some present this animosity as the reason for this series of events. According to this view, when the Jerusalem Church heard that the Samaritans had received the Gospel, their reaction was, "What? Samaritans becoming a part of the Church?" And so, they sent Peter and John to scope out the situation. When the Samaritans received the Holy Spirit through the laying on of the

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<sup>56</sup> The periphrastic future, perfect is achieved by beginning the statement with a future form of εἶμι [eimee] (stating that something is existing), and a perfect participle (meaning that something has already been accomplished). Thus, in the periphrastic, future, perfect, the structure of the expression indicates that something will already have been an accomplished fact.

<sup>57</sup> The same Greek construction (periphrastic, future, imperfect) is used in Matthew 18:18, concerning church discipline (Matthew 18:15-18)

apostles' hands, the Jerusalem Christians were assured that that Samaritans could be a part of the Church.

Another view is that, just as the Ephesians in Acts 19 needed some outward manifestation to convince them that there was/is an active Holy Spirit, so the Samaritans received that assurance through this manifestation. This view does seem probable.

**One thing that is evident is that the New Testament's record of the Holy Spirit's activity defies any formula.** We must accept it as it occurred, and realize that throughout the history of the Church, the Holy Spirit has conducted Himself in a variety of ways. In each setting, the Spirit acts/manifests in a manner that meets the needs of the hour, according to God's perspective.

This reflects the statement that Jesus made to Nicodemus,

*The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit..* (John 3:8)

Honesty and integrity force us to accept the fact that the activity of the Holy Spirit defies being subject to a formula, and that is the position we must take in seeking to understand the account in Acts 8:14-17.

### **Simon, the magician, seeks to purchase the Spirit-imparting power Acts 8:18-24**

*Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, saying, "Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."*

*But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. Therefore, repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you.*

*For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity."*

*But Simon answered and said, "Pray to the Lord for me yourselves, so that nothing of what you have said may come upon me."*

Simon had been receiving praise, and probably money, from those who had witnessed his magic. Realizing that the apostles possessed something greater than what he had been able to display, he wanted this power so that he could continue *astonishing the people of Samaria*, continue in the role that he had before the arrival of the apostles - *and they all, from smallest to greatest, were giving attention to him, saying, "This man is what is called the Great Power of God."*

When someone offers to buy or trade something, the assumption is that what one is purchasing and that which is used to make the purchase are of similar value. Thus, Simon thought that his money was worth what the spiritual gift was worth.

Peter's strong rebuke addressed the heart of the man, *for your heart is not right before God. Therefore, repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity."*

Simon is an example of the saying, *one can enter the baptismal water, as a dry sinner, and come out of the water a wet sinner.* The importance of having a repentant and right heart is key to receiving salvation through being immersed into Christ.

### **As they traveled back to Jerusalem, Peter and John evangelized Samaritan villages Acts 8:25**

*And so, when they had solemnly testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they started back to Jerusalem, and were preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.*

Again, noting the hostility and prejudice that the Jews had for the Samaritans, the apostles' preaching in Samaritan villages makes this a significant milestone in the growth of the Church. Recall the promise that Jesus made to His apostles present when he ascended,

*but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." (Acts 1:8)*

Our Lord's Great Commission agenda had taken the second step forward:

- Jerusalem and Judea
- Then, Samaria

### **Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch Acts 8:26-40**

*But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, "Arise and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a desert road.) And he arose and went; and behold, there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship. And he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah.*

*And the Spirit said to Philip, "Go up and join this chariot."*

*And when Philip had run up, he heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?"*

*And he said, "Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?"*

*And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.*

*Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this: "He was led as a sheep to slaughter; And as a lamb before its shearer is silent, So He does not open His mouth.*

*In humiliation His judgment was taken away; Who shall relate His generation? For His life is removed from the earth."*

*And the eunuch answered Philip and said, "Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself, or of someone else?"*

*And Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him.*

*And as they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being immersed?"*

*[And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may."*

*And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." <sup>158</sup>*

*And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch; and he immersed him.*

*And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch saw him no more but went on his way rejoicing.*

*But Philip found himself at Azotus;<sup>59</sup> and as he passed through he kept preaching the gospel to all the cities, until he came to Caesarea.<sup>60</sup>*

<sup>58</sup> Section in brackets (verse 37) is not included in many of the earliest manuscripts

<sup>59</sup> Azotus was the Greco-Roman name for Ashdod.

<sup>60</sup> See ADDENDUM H for a map displaying the route Philip took in this episode.

The foreknowledge of God is very evident in this account:

- An angel told Philip to go to the road that leads from Jerusalem to Gaza, which would have been a journey of about forty miles. Evidently, Philip walked that distance, which would have taken him two or three days. Therefore, the instructions from the angel were given to Philip two or three days before the Ethiopian would have begun his chariot ride from Jerusalem to Gaza.
- The exact location of Philip's intersecting the Jerusalem/Gaza road is not known, but wherever it was, the Ethiopian in his chariot had just passed that intersection. Perfect timing.

There were two Ethiopias. One was east of Canaan, which does not fit the description of the direction the Ethiopian was traveling. The other Ethiopia was in Africa, south of Egypt, which fits the path that the Ethiopian was traveling. Ethiopians were looked upon as being the meanest and most despicable of the nations. They often were referred to as *blackmoors*. They were ruled by queens, one of them being the Queen of Sheba, who visited Solomon.<sup>61</sup> Candace was a title, rather than a personal name.

It is not unusual to assume that this Ethiopian official was the means whereby the Gospel was first declared in Ethiopia. Psalm 68:31 declared, prophetically, *Envoys will come out of Egypt; Ethiopia will quickly stretch out her hands to God.*<sup>62,63</sup>

The eunuch was a proselyte to Judaism. We have no way of knowing how he encountered the Mosaic faith, but it was significant enough for him to travel all the way to the Jerusalem Temple to worship Yahweh and to obtain a scroll of Isaiah's prophetic writing.

## EXCURSUS

### Eunuch

A eunuch is a man who has been castrated, usually for the purpose of trusted servitude in a royal household (see Esther 1:10; 4:4; and Daniel 1:9).<sup>64</sup> A king would often castrate his servants to ensure they would not be tempted to engage in sexual activity with others in the palace (specifically, the royal harem) or to prevent their plotting an overthrow (eunuchs were incapable of setting up a dynasty of their own). (Dan 1:9 WTT) Eunuchs have been employed in many civilizations, including the Ancient Middle East, Ancient Greece and Rome, China, Korea, and Thailand. Matthew 19:12 records Jesus' comments on various reasons some are eunuchs.

Eunuchs were barred from the assembly in the Temple (Deuteronomy 23:1). They could not be a priest (Leviticus 21:20). However, Isaiah 56:3-5 does hint at some adjustment to this policy.

<sup>61</sup> I Kings 10:1ff

<sup>62</sup> In the Hebrew text, and the Septuagint, this is verse 32

<sup>63</sup> The Hebrew term rendered as *envoys*, is חֲשִׁמִּינִים (*hasminnim*), meaning, *ambassadors*.

<sup>64</sup> Although the KJV renders the Hebrew term as, *chamberlains*, in Esther, the Hebrew term, סָרִיס (sarise') is correctly rendered, *eunuch*, as is done in NAS & NIV. Interestingly, the KJV renders the term correctly in Daniel, but the NAS & NIV render the term as, *officials*.



An angel had instructed Philip to travel from Samaria to the Gaza road. The Holy Spirit, rather than an angel, told him to run and catch up with the chariot. When Philip caught up with the chariot, he heard the eunuch reading Isaiah 53:7, a prophecy concerning the crucifixion of Christ. The eunuch was in for the greatest blessing of his life – to hear the Gospel and its fulfillment of that prophetic word.

Philip was able to inform the eunuch that this Scripture had been fulfilled, to the letter, by Jesus, the Christ. Obviously, God had targeted this man for salvation, and the Holy Spirit must have anointed Philip's presentation – the eunuch became an instant believer.

Philip must have included immersion in his presentation, because when they providentially came to a body of water, the eunuch asked if there were a reason why he could not be immersed.

NOTE: Verse 37, *And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God,"* is not contained in many early manuscripts. Even though the validity of its inclusion in the account is doubtful, it does express the truth that is found throughout the New Testament - believing that Jesus is the Son of God is required of those being immersed.

Although the verse is suspect, Philip's response and the eunuch's response in verse 37, are in sync with what Peter said to the Pentecost crowd, μετανοέω (*metanoëoh*), i.e., *change your mind about who Jesus is*.

The eunuch did not need to change his mind, because he had not heard of Jesus until Philip's presentation. All that was required of him was to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Some exegetes, based on the language of the account, assume the presence of a chariot driver:<sup>65</sup>

- The eunuch was *sitting in the chariot and reading* while it was traveling along the road, implying that someone else was directing the chariot.
- The eunuch *ordered* (κελεύω - *keleuoh* i.e., to command) the chariot to stop, implying that there was a coachman driving the chariot.

Opposition to the view that there was a chariot driver is the fact that he never is mentioned.

Also, the chariot driver would have heard the eunuch reading Isaiah, because Philip heard the eunuch reading. The driver also would have heard Philip's presentation. Surely, if there were a driver, there would be some comment as to his response to all of this.

Honesty requires us to leave the question as to whether or not there were a driver, an unanswered question.

Immediately after the chariot stopped, Philip and the eunuch went into the water and Philip immersed him. Then, as soon as they came out of the water, the Holy Spirit snatched Philip and deposited him at Azotus.

It seems obvious that the Holy Spirit was involved in the presentation of the Gospel and that Holy Spirit was received in the eunuch's immersion, given his joyous response to the event.

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<sup>65</sup> Matthew Henry's *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Volume 6, Acts (Peabody, Mass., Hendrickson Publishers) 2014

From Azotus, Philip embarked on an evangelistic tour, traveling north along the Palestinian/Mediterranean coast, until he came to Caesarea (see ADDENDUM H). From this time onward, Philip was given the label, *evangelist*. Caesarea became his established home. This is seen in Acts 21:8-9, describing the Caesarea stopover that Paul and his companions made on their way to Jerusalem.

*And on the next day we departed and came to Caesarea; and entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him. Now this man had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses.*

### **Saul's Encounter with Jesus Acts 9:1-9**

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

*And it came about that as he journeyed, he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; and he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"<sup>66</sup>*

*And he said, "Who art Thou, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, but rise, and enter the city, and it shall be told you what you must do."*

*And the men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice, but seeing no one.*

*And Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.*

NOTE: This is Luke's account of the event. Paul, himself, twice described the event:

- To the Jewish crowd in Jerusalem (22:6-11)
- Before the young king Agrippa (26:12-18)

In Paul's accounts, he gives information that are not included in Luke's account

Having ravaged the Christians from house to house and putting them in prison (Acts 8:3), Saul was determined to arrest and imprison those who had fled Jerusalem. He first focused his attention on Damascus. Saul must have received a report of Christians having settled in that city. Damascus had a significant Jewish population.

When the Jewish state won its independence under the Hasmonean dynasty of ruling priests in 142 BC, the Romans patronized the new state for political reasons. They ordered all of the neighboring states to grant to the Jewish state the right of extradition. A letter delivered by the Roman ambassador to Ptolemy VIII of Egypt, concludes with the demand, "If any pestilent men have fled to you from their own country [Judea], hand them over to Simon the High Priest, so that he may punish them according to their law."<sup>67</sup> In 47 BC, Julius Caesar confirmed and renewed those rights to the Jewish nation.

Therefore, the letter that Saul obtained from the High Priest authorized Saul to arrest any Christian Jews from Jerusalem, that he might find in Damascus, and to bring them to Jerusalem for trial before the High Priest.

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<sup>66</sup> The KJV inserts, *it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks*. This addition is not found in most manuscripts. Hence, it is omitted in contemporary translations

<sup>67</sup> I Maccabees 15:21

Damascus is on the edge of the Syrian-Arab desert, northeast of Mount Hermon and about 130 miles northeast of Jerusalem (see ADDENDUM I).

Since Damascus was a six-day journey on foot from Jerusalem, and the encounter with Christ took place as they were close to Damascus, Saul and his company would have been traveling on foot for almost six days.

Suddenly, a light flashed around Saul, so bright that he was blinded. Saul's companions heard the voice, but they did not understand what was being said (Acts 22:9).<sup>68</sup> Only Saul experienced the vision.

Some who describe this event, picture Saul riding on a horse.<sup>69</sup> Some describe Saul's horse as being spooked by the light and rearing up and bucking Saul off onto the ground. This is pure speculation - there is no mention of any steed in any of the three accounts.. Later, when describing the event to Agrippa, Paul stated,

*at midday, O King, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who were journeying with me. And when we had all fallen to the ground...*  
(Acts 26:13-14)

Since Paul states that the bright light caused all to fall to the ground, without any mention of Saul's being on a horse, we must discount that idea that Paul was bucked off of a horse.

The risen Christ had appeared to many of his disciples, on the day of his resurrection, and He continued to appear to many others prior to His ascension.

*and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.*

*After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep;*

*then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles;*

*and last of all, as it were to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.*

(1 Corinthians 15:4-8)

In the present account, He appeared to Saul of Tarsus, removing any doubt as to His identity.

In obedience to the voice, Saul's companions led him into Damascus, to await further instructions.

The shock of the experience was so great, that Saul neither ate nor drank for three days.

### **Saul's Healing and Baptism Acts 9:10-18**

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

*And the Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight."*

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<sup>68</sup> The verb in Acts 22:9 is ἀκούω (*akouoh*). This word can mean either *to hear*, or *to understand*. Since 9:7 states that they heard the voice, 22:9 must mean that they heard, but did not understand what the voice was saying.

<sup>69</sup> Taylor Caldwell, *Great Lion of God* (Garden City, NY, Doubleday & Company) 1970 pages 406-412

*But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to Thy saints at Jerusalem; and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call upon Thy name."*

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

*And Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit."*

*And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he arose and was immersed.*

Those who had fled Jerusalem, reported on Saul's horrible crusade against the church. His reputation became well known in Damascus. Because of this, Ananias had the audacity to argue with the Lord - *Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to Thy saints at Jerusalem; and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call upon Thy name.*

The Lord's words to Ananias, *Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake*, is a portent of what was ahead for Saul.

To everyone's surprise, Saul was a chosen instrument, who would spend the rest of his life, taking the Gospel to many regions, and along the way, would endure much suffering.

The Lord saw Saul's pure heart – he thought that he was doing the right thing – that which he thought God wanted him to do. He later wrote to Timothy,

*even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. And yet I was shown mercy, because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; (I Timothy 1:13)*

It could be said that Saul had a right heart, but a wrong head. The Lord took this sincere, zealous, heart, and used this zeal for the spread of the Gospel.

### **Saul's Witness to the Jews of Damascus Acts 9: 18-22**

*and he took food and was strengthened. Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus, and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God."*

*And all those hearing him continued to be amazed, and were saying, "Is this not he who in Jerusalem destroyed those who called on this name, and who had come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?"*

*But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this Jesus is the Christ.*

Interestingly, other than the questionable text of 8:37, this is the only instance in Acts in which the term, *Son of God*, is found.

Given Saul's history, his proclamation concerning the identity of Jesus was difficult, if not impossible, to refute.

No doubt Saul used the Old Testament prophecies, which all in the synagogues considered to be the Word of God, in his proclamation of Jesus' identity. From his own experience, as well as the

testimony of Christians, which he earlier had discounted, Saul demonstrated that Jesus had fulfilled these prophecies.

### **The Jews Attempt to Kill Saul Acts 9:23-25**

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

Paul described this situation in two of his letters.

- *In Damascus, the ethnarch under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes in order to seize me, <sup>and</sup> I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and so escaped his hands. (II Corinthians 11:32-33)*
- *But when He who had set me apart, even from my mother's womb, and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days. But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother. (Galatians 1:15-19)*

### **EXCURSUS**

#### **Arabia/Nabatea**

The Arabia to which Paul refers in Galatians was Nabatea, ruled over by Aretas IV, from 7 BC to 40 AD. The background to the episode, recorded in II Corinthians, and Galatians, is the relationship between Aretas and Herod Antipas.

Following the death of his father in 4 BC, Herod Antipas was recognized as tetrarch by Caesar Augustus. Antipas officially ruled Galilee and Perea as a client state of the Roman Empire.

Antipas divorced his first wife Phasaelis, the daughter of King Aretas IV of Nabatea, in favour of Herodias, who had formerly been married to his half-brother Herod II.

This so enraged Aretas, that he launched a military campaign against Herod Antipas and successfully defeated Herod's army, and for a period of time ruled the area that included Damascus.

The ethnarch referenced in II Corinthians 11:32 was Aretas' governing agent in Damascus.

It often is supposed that Paul went into the desert of Nabatea on a religious retreat, to spend time alone in the desert quietly seeking revelation from God, without distraction. However, it also is

possible that having just received the revelation of Christ and preaching aggressively in Damascus, he did the same thing in Nabatea. This would have resulted in turmoil in the Nabatean Jewish community. Such a disturbance would have annoyed the Nabatean government, which, being threatened by Rome, was insecure at that time.

The *many days*, in Acts 9:23 would have included the time spent in Nabatea. The *three years* of Galatians 1:18, refers to the time that elapsed between Saul's conversion and the time of his second departure from Damascus.

Because of the Jewish manner of describing time, it is possible that the actual time (as we count time) might have been just a bit more than one year:

- The year in which Saul's conversion happened would be considered the first year, even though it might have included just a month or two.
- The second year would be a full year.
- The third year would have been the year in which he left Damascus to go the Jerusalem, even though it might have included just a month or two.

So, we must be content with not being able to nail down the time, specifically.

Unable to overcome Saul in debate, the Jews decided that they had to get rid of him, and the only way to do that was to kill him. Aretas' ethnarch, possibly because of a disturbance that Saul caused in Nabatea, as well as the anger of the Damascus Jews, motivated the ruling government of Damascus to cooperate in the effort to kill Paul.

In the walled cities of that era, houses and apartments often were built into the walls,<sup>70</sup> so that windows were a part of the wall. Thus, the Christians in Damascus were able to implement Saul's escape.

### **Saul's First Visit to Jerusalem after His Conversion Acts 9:26-30**

*And when he had come to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples; and they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple.*

*But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus.*

*And he was with them moving about freely in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord.*

*And he was talking and arguing with the Hellenistic Jews; but they were attempting to put him to death.*

*But when the brethren learned of it, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus.*

Saul would have passed the spot where Jesus had encountered him, on the Damascus-Jerusalem road. We can only speculate about what his feelings must have been when he passed that location..

When he reached Jerusalem, Saul did not find a ready welcome.

- His former Jewish associates probably had learned of his defection and so, he now was their enemy.

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<sup>70</sup> For example, the house of Rahab the harlot in Joshua 2:1ff; 6:17ff

- It is not surprising that the Jerusalem Christians did not trust Saul. Even though they might have heard reports of his conversion, they probably thought that he was a spy, seeking to get the names and locations of the believers in order to arrest them.

As Ananias had become Saul's friend and associate in Damascus, so Barnabas became that friend in Jerusalem.

Barnabas had achieved respect and status in the Jerusalem church. Evidently, Barnabas had remained in Jerusalem with the apostles, when the rest of the church was scattered (Acts 8:1).

Some have speculated that Barnabas and Saul had been fellow students under Gamaliel, but there is no evidence of this. There is no record of Barnabas' and Saul's meeting. We must be content without our not knowing any of the details of the beginning of their relationship.

The picture of Barnabas in this account is consistent with the description of him in other passages. A man of trust, and seemingly eager to encourage and comfort those about him. When he interviewed Saul, possibly through the leading of the Holy Spirit, he was convinced of the genuineness of Saul's testimony.

Barnabas took Saul to the apostles, whom Paul, in Galatians, identifies as Cephas (Peter), and James, the Lord's brother. (Galatians 1:19)

Barnabas' report convinced Cephas and James and so Saul was able to launch into another season of vigorous preaching.

As had been true of Stephen, it was the Hellenistic Jews of Jerusalem who sought to kill Saul, even as they had done with Stephen.

For the second time, Saul was saved from death by his brothers in Christ who escorted him out of Jerusalem to Caesarea. From Caesarea, they put Saul on a ship and sent him to his native city of Tarsus.<sup>71</sup>

In his Galatian epistle, Paul states that after this event, *Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.* (Galatians 1:21)<sup>72</sup>

The narrative leaves Saul in Tarsus, until he again appears in Acts 11:25.

### **Peter at Lydda and the Healing of Aeneas Acts 9:32-35**

*Now it came about that as Peter was traveling through all those parts, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda.*

*And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years, for he was paralyzed.*

*And Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; arise, and make your bed." And immediately he arose.*

*And all who lived at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord.*

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<sup>71</sup> See ADDENDUM I for the location of Tarsus

<sup>72</sup> Tarsus was the leading city of Cilicia, and at that time was about one thousand years old.

Even though it came under Roman control in 64 BC, it always maintained its autonomy as a free city. It was a leading city of culture, with schools of philosophy, rhetoric, and law.

This is the beginning of the travels of any of the Twelve Apostles, following Peter and John's visit to Samaria.

Lydda is a town about twenty miles west of Jerusalem. It is on the road (west and slightly north) to the coastal city of Joppa.<sup>73</sup> Some of the Jerusalem Church that had scattered to regions in Judea had settled in Lydda. Lydda (also known as, Lod [I Chronicles 8:12]), is located in the very fertile plain of Sharon. It was on the north/south trade route. Lydda had a reputation for being the place along the route where there were craftsmen and repairmen to repair and make items needed by the caravans.

It is natural to assume that the paralytic was a member of the Christian community.

Peter resumed the ministry of healing that had characterized his earlier ministry. Note that there is no mention of the laying on of hands, but just the declaration and command, *Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; arise, and make your bed.*

Peter's words made it clear that he was not the healer, but that the healer was Jesus Christ.

Aeneas immediate response indicates a faith/belief that motivated him to do exactly what was commanded.

The news of this man's healing spread throughout the fertile plain, resulting in many of the region's coming to the Lord.

### **Peter at Joppa; the raising of Dorcas Acts 9:36-43**

*Now in Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha (which translated in Greek is called Dorcas); this woman was abounding with deeds of kindness and charity, which she continually did.*

*And it came about at that time that she fell sick and died; and when they had washed her body, they laid it in an upper room.*

*And since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, having heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him, entreating him, "Do not delay to come to us."*

*And Peter arose and went with them. And when he had come, they brought him into the upper room; and all the widows stood beside him weeping, and showing all the tunics and garments that Dorcas used to make while she was with them.*

*But Peter sent them all out and knelt down and prayed, and turning to the body, he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up.*

*And he gave her his hand and raised her up; and calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive.*

*And it became known all over Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.*

*And it came about that he stayed many days in Joppa with a certain tanner, Simon.*

It was the custom of the Jews of that era, that under normal circumstances<sup>74</sup>, three days were to pass between a person's death and burial. This was done to make certain that the person was dead.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> See ADDENDUM H for the geographical relationship between Jerusalem, Lydda, and Joppa

<sup>74</sup> The deaths of Jesus and Stephen were not under normal circumstances.

<sup>75</sup> Present-day Orthodox Jews do not embalm. They have a storage area in the synagogue in which bodies are stored under refrigeration until the proper time to bury the body.



<sup>76</sup>Something special seems to have been done for Tabitha.<sup>77</sup> According to the Jewish custom of purification, her body was washed, but not anointed for burial. It could be, that since they heard of Peter's healing of Aeneas, they hoped for him to come and bring forth a miracle for Tabitha.

Peter responded immediately to the message and traveled the short distance to Joppa.<sup>78</sup>

Upon arrival, Peter immediately was made aware of what a great loss the church had sustained. The widows were showing him the garments that Dorcas had made for them while she was alive. The participle rendering, *showing*, is middle voice, indicating that they were exhibiting the clothes by wearing them for Peter to see.

Peter followed the pattern that Jesus had modeled, when He raised Jairus's daughter.<sup>79</sup> He sent the mourners out of the room<sup>80</sup> He then uttered a short sentence in Aramaic, differing in only one letter from Jesus's words to Jairus's daughter. The difference was the one letter difference in their names:

- Jesus said, *Talitha cum – Talitha, get up*
- Peter said, *Tabitha cum – Tabitha, get up*

When she opened her eyes and sat up, Peter raised her to her feet and presented her to her wondering friends.

As had been true with other examples of miraculous works, many of the region came to Christ.

Peter stayed on in Joppa for a considerable time. His host, Simon the tanner, lived by the seaside. One possible reason for his location is the need for sea water for his work.

Another reason for the location of his home would have been the ritual uncleanness associated with his profession. It involved the regular contact with the skins of dead animals.

### **Cornelius a Devout Roman Centurion Proselyte Sees a Vision Acts 10:1-8**

*Now there was a certain man at Caesarea named Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian cohort,*

*a devout man, and one who feared God with all his household, and gave many alms to the Jewish people, and prayed to God continually.*

*About the ninth hour of the day he clearly saw in a vision an angel of God who had just come in to him, and said to him, "Cornelius!"*

*And fixing his gaze upon him and being much alarmed, he said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him, "Your prayers and alms have ascended as a memorial before God.*

*And now dispatch some men to Joppa, and send for a man named Simon, who is also called Peter; he is staying with a certain tanner named Simon, whose house is by the sea."*

*And when the angel who was speaking to him had departed, he summoned two of his servants and a devout soldier of those who were in constant attendance upon him, and after he had explained everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.*

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<sup>76</sup> Mishnah *Shabbat* 23.5

<sup>77</sup> Tabitha is an Aramaic name, meaning, *gazelle*. *Dorcas*, is the Greek equivalent, which Luke included for his Greek readers.

<sup>78</sup> Present-day driving distance from Lydda to Joppa is between 14 and 17 miles, depending on the road one takes.

<sup>79</sup> Mark 5:22-24, 37-43; Luke 8:41-42, 49-55

<sup>80</sup> Mark 5:40

In the regular Roman army, a cohort was a tenth part of a legion. Usually, a cohort had a proper strength of 600 men. However, during this period, Roman governors of Judea had auxiliary cohorts, who had the full contingent of a legion – 1000 men. The *Italian cohort*, was one of these, so named because it had been raised in Italy.

Centurions usually commanded 100 men. They were similar in duty to a modern-day captain. According to the historian, Polybus, *Centurions are required not to be bold and adventurous so much as good leaders, of steady and prudent mind, not prone to take the offensive or start fighting wantonly, but able when overwhelmed and hard-pressed to stand fast and die at their post.*<sup>81</sup>

In all probability, there were some Gentiles in Joppa when Peter was there, who had been touched by the reports of the resurrection of Tabitha, but there had not, as yet, been a specific, authoritative, call given to the Gentiles. This is the beginning of that which Jesus had declared before his ascension, *but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.*" (Acts 1:8)

As noted earlier:

- the first step in the fulfillment of this declaration occurred on Pentecost, when Jews heard the Gospel.
- the second step in the fulfillment of this declaration occurred when Philip went to Samaria and evangelized the half-breed Jews
- this is the third step – the evangelization of those who were Gentiles, although there probably were some Jews in the audience, when Peter spoke in the home of Cornelius.

Again, we note that it was Peter who, on this occasion, unlocked heaven for Gentiles, in keeping with Jesus' declaration, *"I will give you (Peter)*<sup>82</sup> *the keys of the kingdom of heaven;* (Matthew 16:19a)

Cornelius, though a Gentile, was a worshipper of the God of Israel. The vision occurred to him at 3 PM, modern time, which was the Jewish hour of prayer.

Cornelius' initial alarm at the vision was overcome by the statement that his faithfulness had not been overlooked by God. The language used by the angel pictures Cornelius' prayers and alms as having risen before God as the smoke on the altar ascended when the sacrifices were offered in the Jerusalem Temple.

Upon receiving the command from the angel, Cornelius immediately obeyed. Cornelius sent a soldier, who, like Cornelius, was a devout worshipper of Jehovah. The soldier would have had the authority to complete the mission. Along with the soldier, he sent two servants.

### **Peter Receives a Vision, Instructing Him to do Something that Violated His Jewish Conscience Acts 10:9-16**

*And on the next day, as they were on their way, and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray.*

*And he became hungry, and was desiring to eat; but while they were making preparations, he fell into a trance; and he beheld the sky opened up, and a certain object like a great sheet coming*

<sup>81</sup> Polybus, *History* 6.24. His histories cover the period 264-146 BC

<sup>82</sup> The *you*, is second person singular, σοι (*soi*), meaning that only to Peter were the keys given.

*down, lowered by four corners to the ground, and there were in it all kinds of four-footed animals and crawling creatures of the earth and birds of the air.*

*And a voice came to him, "Arise, Peter, kill and eat!"*

*But Peter said, "By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything unholy and unclean."*

*And again a voice came to him a second time, "What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy."*

*And this happened three times; and immediately the object was taken up into the sky.*

The roofs of homes in that region were flat, with a short wall surrounding the edge of the roof. Throughout Scripture, there are accounts of individuals' being on the roof, for one reason or another (for example, II Samuel 11:2)

The sixth hour would have been noontime, when lunch was being prepared in the house below. Peter's vision would have occurred when the three emissaries would have been getting close to Joppa, the day after Cornelius' vision,.

Before Peter could preach to Gentiles, he had to be re-programmed by God. His Jewish sensibilities had to be erased. Unclean animals, as described in the Mosaic Covenant, could not be used for food.<sup>83</sup> Even clean animals had to be slaughtered with ritual propriety before their flesh could be consumed.

Three times the exchange between the protesting Peter and the angelic message was given, then the vision went away.

### **The Messengers from Cornelius Arrive Acts 10:17-23a**

*Now while Peter was greatly perplexed in mind as to what the vision which he had seen might be, behold, the men who had been sent by Cornelius, having asked directions for Simon's house, appeared at the gate; and calling out, they were asking whether Simon, who was also called Peter, was staying there.*

*And while Peter was reflecting on the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are looking for you. But arise, go downstairs, and accompany them without misgivings; for I have sent them Myself."*

*And Peter went down to the men and said, "Behold, I am the one you are looking for; what is the reason for which you have come?"*

*And they said, "Cornelius, a centurion, a righteous and God-fearing man well-spoken of by the entire nation of the Jews, was divinely directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and hear a message from you."*

*And so he invited them in and gave them lodging.*

The trance was over, but Peter remained on the roof, pondering what all of this meant. The Spirit then spoke to him and told him that there were three men looking for him and he was to go with them without any hesitancy or uncertainty about what lay ahead. God had begun the work in Peter's heart, but there was further confirmation waiting.

The messengers described their master as *a righteous and God-fearing man well-spoken of by the entire nation of the Jews*. This might have relieved Peter of some of his consternation, but God had even more evidence in store for Peter, when he began preaching in Cornelius' home.

They spent the night in Simon's house, before leaving the next day for Caesarea.

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<sup>83</sup> Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14

### **Peter Arrives at the Home of Cornelius Acts 10:23b-33**

*And on the next day he arose and went away with them, and some of the brethren from Joppa accompanied him.*

*And on the following day he entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them, and had called together his relatives and close friends.*

*And when it came about that Peter entered, Cornelius met him, and fell at his feet and worshiped him. But Peter raised him up, saying, "Stand up; I too am just a man."*

*And as he talked with him, he entered, and found many people assembled. And he said to them, "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and yet God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean.*

*That is why I came without even raising any objection when I was sent for. And so I ask for what reason you have sent for me."*

*And Cornelius said, "Four days ago to this hour, I was praying in my house during the ninth hour; and behold, a man stood before me in shining garments, and he said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. Send therefore to Joppa and invite Simon, who is also called Peter, to come to you; he is staying at the house of Simon the tanner by the sea.'*

*"And so I sent to you immediately, and you have been kind enough to come. Now then, we are all here present before God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord."*

- On Day 1, Cornelius saw the angel and sent messengers to Joppa
- On Day 2, they arrived about midday, just after Peter's vision on the roof
- On Day 3, Peter set out on the mission, wisely taking six fellow believers with him (11:12) They spent the night of Day 3, somewhere on the road between Joppa and Caesarea.
- On Day 4, they reached Caesarea, where Cornelius had gathered his relatives and close friends in his house, awaiting Peter's arrival. We wonder, "How long had they been waiting?"

When the group arrived at Cornelius' house, the Centurion rushed out to meet him and, with the respect that he thought appropriate for a messenger of God, fell at Peter's feet in an attitude of homage and supplication.

Peter probably was embarrassed by this and quickly raised Cornelius from the ground and said, *I too am just man.*

As Peter and Cornelius talked in a friendly manner, they came into the building and, to Peter's surprise, there was a group of people waiting for Peter, with eager expectation.

Two or three days previously, Peter could not have imagined himself in a Gentile home with this Gentile audience. Finding himself in the clearly, God-directed, situation. Peter still had to remind everyone that it was taboo for a Jew to mix, socially, in Gentile society - but that God had shown him, in the vision, that his lifelong taboos no longer were appropriate. If God had pronounced unclean food, clean, the Peter quickly grasped the analogy between ceremonial food laws and the long-standing conventions concerning intercourse with non-Jews.

Cornelius reply, *Four days ago to this hour, I was praying in my house during the ninth hour,* indicated that he had been praying at 3 PM, the traditional hour of afternoon prayer.

Cornelius vision occurred two days before Peter's vision (based on the day-by-day calculations above).

No preacher ever had a more promising audience than that which awaited Peter, *Now then, we are all here present before God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord.*

**Gentiles, For the First Time, are presented the Good News Acts 10:34-43**

*And opening his mouth, Peter said: "I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right, is welcome to Him.*

*The word which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)-- you yourselves know the thing which took place throughout all Judea, starting from Galilee, after the baptism which John proclaimed.*

*You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed by the devil; for God was with Him.*

*And we are witnesses of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. And they also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross.*

*God raised Him up on the third day, and granted that He should become visible, not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, that is, to us, who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead.*

*And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead.*

*Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins."*

This is stage #3 in the fulfillment of Jesus words spoken before His ascension (Acts 1:8)

- Jews on Pentecost
- Half-breed Jews in Samaria
- Gentiles in the home of Cornelius

The first words that Peter spoke were of very significant import – that God had wiped away the distinctions between Jews and Gentiles – *but in every nation he who is fearing Him, and is working righteousness, is acceptable to Him* (literal translation). This was a revolutionary revelation to Peter, the devout Jew.

NOTE: Luke, being a Gentile, had ample reason to emphasize this truth, when he penned the report of Peter's statement.

As Peter began his speech, he was aware that the audience was aware of Jesus' reputation, since stories about Jesus had become well known. In addition to Jesus' known reputation, Peter was able to say that he, personally, had been a witness to the things that had been reported, concerning Jesus, including His resurrection.

Peter's statement concerning Jesus, *anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power*, calls to mind how Jesus began His ministry. In the synagogue of Nazareth, he read from Isaiah 61:1-2.

*And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book, and found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, And recovery of sight to the blind, To set free those who are downtrodden, To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord." And He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed upon Him. And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." (Luke 4:17-21)*

### **Gentiles receive the Holy Spirit Acts 10:44-48**

*While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message.*

*And all the circumcised believers who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon the Gentiles also.*

*For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God.*

*Then Peter answered, "Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be immersed who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?"*

*And he ordered them to be immersed in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days.*

On the Day of Pentecost, Peter declared that the pattern of initiation into the new community consisted of belief, repentance, and immersion, which was followed by receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Here, the pattern is reversed. Receiving the Holy Spirit came before immersion (we may assume that there was faith/belief).

The reason for the alteration of the pattern in the present episode becomes immediately apparent in the response of the Jewish Christians who had accompanied Peter, *And all the circumcised believers who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon the Gentiles also.* God, sovereignly, had declared, through the impartation of the gift of the Holy Spirit upon Gentiles, that ethnicity no longer was a barrier to being received into the Kingdom of God.

Their reception of the Spirit was not regarded as a substitute for their being immersed in water. The pattern of salvation never is complete without immersion, and so Peter posits that given the reception of the Spirit, no one could object to the immediate immersion of those on whom the Spirit had fallen.

Note that *the circumcised believers who had come with Peter* did not suggest that Cornelius or any of the audience be circumcised. This case became very important in the question of Gentile's reception into the kingdom in the Jerusalem council (Acts 15).

### **Peter called to Account Acts 11:1-3**

*Now the apostles and the brethren who were throughout Judea, heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God.*

*And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those who were circumcised took issue with him, saying, "You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them."*

The news of Peter's revolutionary behavior reached Jerusalem before his return. When he returned to Jerusalem, he immediately received a rebuke from the circumcised, i.e., Jewish Christians

Up to this point, the apostles seemed to have had good relationship with the Jewish population at large (not the religious hierarchy). This was seen, for example, in the attitude of the crowd when the apostles were arrested in the episode recorded in Acts 5:21-26. However, if word got around that one of the apostles had fraternized with Gentiles, that goodwill would soon dissipate. In fact, that may have happened, as we see in ongoing chapters of Acts.

### **Peter's Defense Acts 11:4-18**

*But Peter began speaking and proceeded to explain to them in orderly sequence, saying, "I was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, a certain object coming down like a great sheet lowered by four corners from the sky; and it came right down to me, and when I had fixed my gaze upon it and was observing it I saw the four-footed animals of the earth and the wild beasts and the crawling creatures and the birds of the air.*

*And I also heard a voice saying to me, 'Arise, Peter; kill and eat.'*

*But I said, 'By no means, Lord, for nothing unholy or unclean has ever entered my mouth.'*

*But a voice from heaven answered a second time, 'What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy.'*

*And this happened three times, and everything was drawn back up into the sky.*

*And behold, at that moment three men appeared before the house in which we were staying, having been sent to me from Caesarea.*

*And the Spirit told me to go with them without misgivings.*

*And these six brethren also went with me, and we entered the man's house.*

*And he reported to us how he had seen the angel standing in his house, and saying, 'Send to Joppa, and have Simon, who is also called Peter, brought here; and he shall speak words to you by which you will be saved, you and all your household.'*

*And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, just as He did upon us at the beginning.*

*And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, 'John immersed with water, but you shall be immersed with the Holy Spirit.'*

*If God therefore gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?"*

*And when they heard this, they quieted down, and glorified God, saying, "Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life."*

Peter's description of the series of events leading up to the immersion of those in the Caesarean audience is abridgement of Luke's narrative in 10:9-48. However, he does add an element in his description of the contents of the sheet that he saw in the vision:

- Luke's narrative: *four-footed animals and crawling creatures of the earth and birds of the air* (Acts 10:12)
- Peter's first-person account: *four-footed animals of the earth and the wild beasts and the crawling creatures and the birds of the air* (Acts 11:6)

Peter adds, *wild beasts* in his account.

Peter does not mention immersion in water, as was described in the narrative in Chapter 10. However, it is implied in Peter's statement, *If God therefore gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?"*

This implies that he and the six brothers that he brought with him did not stand in God's way, but proceeded as they would have done with Jewish converts – immersed them.

Peter's defense, verified by the six who had traveled with him, silenced the objections and then resulted in a rejoicing that now the Gospel was available to everyone.

### **Antioch – the Next Chapter in the Evangelization of Gentiles Acts 11:19-26**

*So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone.*

*But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus.*

*And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord.*

*And the news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch.*

*Then when he had come and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord; for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord.*

*And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul; and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And it came about that for an entire year they met with the church, and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.*

See ADDENDUM J for the geographical location of the sites mentioned in this episode.

Antioch had a reputation for moral laxity. This was enhanced by the cult of Artemis and Apollo, at Daphne, located five miles outside of Antioch. The ritual prostitution involved in the worship of these pagan gods greatly influenced the region.

Luke began this portion of the narrative with the same words that he used in 8:4, describing the scattering, preceding Philip's visit to Samaria (οἱ ἐν οὖν διασπαρέντες - *hoi en oon diasparentes*) literally, *they indeed, having been scattered*.

This seems to be Part II of the scattering. The events described here being simultaneous with Philip's traveling to Samaria.

Some of those who were scattered traveled north, along the Phoenician seaboard. Some took a ship to Cyprus, and some traveled on north along the seaboard to Antioch.

Not knowing about Peter's experience in Caesarea, the first group of pilgrims only evangelized among the Jewish population of the area.

After a time, some men coming from Cyprus and Cyrene<sup>84</sup> took the daring step of preaching to Gentiles.

The results of these evangelistic efforts were so phenomenal, that the news of these events reached the Church at Jerusalem. By what means, we do not know.

A considerable amount of time had passed, since these refugees arrived in Antioch. That is evident from the fact that enough time had passed for there to be a sizeable group of Antiochans to become believers and for an embryonic church to have developed.

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<sup>84</sup> Cyrene is on the north coast of Africa. Because of this, it seems improbable that believers from Cyrene traveled to Antioch. It would appear that these were Cyrene natives who had lived in Jerusalem and become a part of the church there. Note that some from Cyrene were present at Pentecost (Acts 2:10). Simon of Cyrene was recruited to carry Jesus' cross, when Jesus stumbled (Matthew 27:32; Mark 15:21; Luke 23:26). Simon of Cyrene's sons, Alexander and Rufus, became well known in the early church (Mark 15:21)



The apostles felt responsible for the direction of the Christian movement and so, as they had sent Peter and John to Samaria, they sent Barnabas to Antioch. He was a representative of the apostles and the mother church. Since the Jerusalem Church sent Barnabas with a commission, he could be called, *Jerusalem's apostle to Antioch*.

Barnabas was a native of Cyrene (Acts 4:36). It may be that Barnabas offered his services and his offer was quickly accepted. He was the perfect choice for this mission.

The name given to him by the Jerusalem Church, Barnabas (i.e. son of consolation) was a description of his behavior at Antioch. *Then when he had come and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord; for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.*

His generous and encouraging spirit not only edified the church, but even resulted in more additions to the Body of Christ.

With so many new converts, Barnabas realized the need for those who could disciple the new believers. The task was too much for him to accomplish alone. He needed someone else on the team with him. He remembered Saul – a man whom Barnabas thought would perfectly fit the role. However, could he find him? It had been several years since Saul had been escorted to Caesarea by his new friends at Jerusalem and put on a ship for Tarsus. Barnabas traveled to Tarsus. After he found Saul, they returned to Antioch and together they disciplined the converts for a full year. During this time, the church continued to grow.

A significant event occurred at Antioch – for the first time, disciples became known as, *Christians*,<sup>85</sup> the name whereby followers of Jesus have been known ever since.

### **Famine Relief for the Saints in Judea Acts 11:27-30**

*Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch.*

*And one of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the reign of Claudius.*

*And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea.*

*And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders.*

Prophets were important in the history of the Church. In Paul's letters, the role of the prophet was next to that of the apostle in importance.<sup>86</sup> Throughout the narrative in Acts, this gift will be displayed.

One of the prophets, Agabus, announced that there would be a famine throughout the whole Roman world. Luke informs us that this did occur during the reign of Claudius. (41-54 AD)

History records that there was a severe famine at some point between 45 and 48 AD.<sup>87</sup> Helena, queen-mother of Adiabene,<sup>88</sup> a Jewish proselyte, bought grain in Egypt and figs in Cyprus and had them taken to Jerusalem. Her son, King Izates, sent a large sum of money to the authorities in Jerusalem to help during the famine.

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<sup>85</sup> Χρῖστος *Christos* – the Greek form of the Hebrew, *Messiah*, meaning, *anointed one*.

<sup>86</sup> I Corinthians 12:28; 14:24-25, 29, 32; Ephesians 4:11

<sup>87</sup> Among these sources is Josephus, *Antiquities* 20:51-53; 20:101.

<sup>88</sup> A district in the Syrian empire

The Antioch Christians realized that the brethren in Judea would have a very hard time, during this period, because the Jewish authorities would not favor them in any of the relief efforts. Therefore, the Antioch Christians who had any means whereby they could help, contributed to a fund to be sent to Jerusalem. Note that the Antiochan Christians did not have a common purse, as was true of the early days of the Jerusalem Church.

Barnabas and Saul were commissioned to take the offering to the elders of the church at Jerusalem. Note that this is the first time that elders are mentioned as being the leadership of the local church. There is no indication as to when these first elders were chosen. From this time onward, elders are seen in the leadership of the church, sharing that role with apostles, when apostles are present (for example, Acts 15).

This is the second time that Saul visited Jerusalem after his conversion, the first being briefly described in 9:26-30.

### **The Martyrdom of James and the Imprisonment of Peter Acts 12:1-4**

*Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church, in order to mistreat them.*

*And he had James the brother of John put to death with a sword.*

*And when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. Now it was during the days of Unleavened Bread.*

*And when he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out before the people.*

The Herod family began its political career when one of the conquering Hasmonians appointed Antipas as governor of Idumaea.<sup>89</sup> The Herod family was Idumaeans, not Jewish.

Antipas' son, Antipater, was a politician of clever intrigue who allied himself with one of the Hasmonian contenders for the High Priesthood. Antipater persuaded his Hasmonian cohort, Hyrcanus II to seek Roman aid in Antipater's achieving the position. Of course, Rome was happy to enter the picture. Initially Antipater and Hyrcanus supported Pompey in his political career, but when Julius Caesar defeated Pompey at Pharsalus (48 BC), they immediately gave their loyalties to Julius Caesar. As a result, Antipater was made procurator of Judea.

When Antipater was assassinated (43 BC), his son, Herod the Great, became the dominant leader. From that time onward, the family was known as *the Herods*. Although not of Jewish blood, Herod sought to have Jewish credentials by encouraging the circulation of an unfounded claim that his family was descended from an illustrious Babylonian Jew.

The King Herod in this narrative is the elder Herod Agrippa. He was a grandson of Herod the Great and his Hasmonian queen, Mariamne. When the son of this couple, Aristobulus, was executed in 78 BC, Agrippa's mother sent him to Rome, to live with relatives. In Rome he grew up with close friendships with some members of the imperial family. He developed a special relationship with Claudius and with Gaius, the grandnephew of the emperor, Tiberius.

When Gaius succeeded Tiberius as emperor in 37 AD, he placed Agrippa over the former tetrarchies of Philip and also those of Lysanias in southern Syria (Luke 3:1). When Gaius gave Agrippa these regions, he bestowed on him the title, *King*.

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<sup>89</sup> Idumaea was a region south of the Dead Sea

Two years later, Agrippa was given the territories of Galilee and Peraea. In 41 AD, after the assassination of Gaius, Claudius further increased Agrippa's realm by giving him Judea.

Agrippa was more popular with the Jews than the other Herods. One thing that was in his favor was his descent from the Hasmonaean dynasty (the dynasty of priests). He did what he could to increase his favor with the Jews.

It seems that after the death of Stephen, the apostles were not targeted with any focused persecution. Now, Herod Agrippa, looking for ways to increase his favor with the Jews, made them his principal targets.

The first victim of Herod's seditious plan to curry favor with the Jews was the apostle, James, the son of Zebedee and the brother of John. He was the first apostle to experience the martyrdom promised to the apostles (Mark 10:38-39).

After putting James to death, and seeing how this curried the favor of the Jews, his next target was Peter, the one who had taken the initiative of fraternizing with Gentiles.

The seven days of unleavened bread were just beginning when Peter was arrested. The seven days began with Nisan 14 (Passover eve) until Nisan 21 (Exodus 21:18). It would have been unpopular with the Jewish population to execute Peter during the sacred season. Note that Mark 14:2 informs us that Jesus' enemies planned his arrest, *for they were saying, "Not during the festival, lest there be a riot of the people."* However, in spite of this plan, Jesus' arrest and execution did take place during these days.

Herod planned to bring Peter out for public trial, after the seven days, but knowing how many sympathizers the apostles had in Jerusalem (both open and secret), he took special precautions to make certain that no one freed Peter. He assigned four relays of soldiers to guard him. Two soldiers, one on either side were chained to Peter and two soldiers guarded the door (verse 6).

### **Peter's Escape Acts 12:5-11**

*So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God.*

*And on the very night when Herod was about to bring him forward, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains; and guards in front of the door were watching over the prison.*

*And behold, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared, and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter's side and roused him, saying, "Get up quickly." And his chains fell off his hands.*

*And the angel said to him, "Gird yourself and put on your sandals." And he did so. And he said to him, "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me." And he went out and continued to follow, and he did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision.*

*And when they had passed the first and second guard, they came to the iron gate that leads into the city, which opened for them by itself; and they went out and went along one street; and immediately the angel departed from him.*

*And when Peter came to himself, he said, "Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent forth His angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting."*

James wrote *The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.* (James 5:16)

The continuous fervent prayer of the church, indeed, did accomplish much. One of the most amazing things in the history of the early church took place.

The fact that Peter was asleep is somewhat amazing, considering that he was chained between two soldiers. We wonder if the soldiers also were asleep and the angel made certain that they were not awakened by the events that took place.

Suddenly, there was a bright light in the cell, Peter received a blow on his side, and a voice told him to get up. The chains with which he was handcuffed to the soldiers on either side fell off.

Only half-awake. Peter did what he was told, not fully realizing what was happening. Perhaps he thought that it was a dream. Led by the angel, Peter passed through two guarded gates. We wonder, did the angel cause the guards to fall into a coma?

After the angel departed, Peter realized that this was the real thing – he was free!

This is the second time apostles had been released from prison by an angel. The first time was the release of all of the apostles, as recorded in Acts 5:17ff.

### **Peter Reports his Escape Acts 12:12-17**

*And when he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying.*

*And when he knocked at the door of the gate, a servant-girl named Rhoda came to answer. And when she recognized Peter's voice, because of her joy she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter was standing in front of the gate.*

*And they said to her, "You are out of your mind!" But she kept insisting that it was so. And they kept saying, "It is his angel."*

*But Peter continued knocking; and when they had opened the door, they saw him and were amazed.*

*But motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had led him out of the prison. And he said, "Report these things to James and the brethren." And he departed and went to another place.*

The first thing that Peter needed to do was to report his release to his fellow-believers, then go into hiding, lest Agrippa's police should find him and re-imprison him.

The Jerusalem church was too large to meet in any one building and so, it seems, that its members were divided for fellowship and worship into a number of house churches. The group that met in Mary's home is probably the group that Peter was attached, since that is the group to which he went when he was freed from prison.

The Mary in this account was the mother of a son who had both a Jewish name (John) and a Roman name (Mark). He is mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament (Acts 13:5, 13; 15:37; Colossians 4:10; Philemon 24:2; II Timothy 4:11; I Peter 5:13), and was the author of the third Gospel.

Rhoda was so excited that she forgot to open the door for Peter. Her report caused the group to respond in disbelief, telling Rhoda that she was insane. Then, because of her insistence, they concluded that it was his guardian angel (Matthew 18:10). In Jewish lore, one's guardian angel was regarded as being capable of assuming the bodily appearance of the one whom he protected.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> The role of the angel, Raphael, in Tobit 5:4-6 probably reflects this belief.

When Peter finally was admitted, and the group exploded with excitement, Peter became concerned that the neighbors would start to wonder what was happening. He urged the group to quiet down. After he reported what had happened, he told the group to quickly report this to James and the brothers, then went into hiding. By this time, James, the half-brother of Jesus, had attained a role of leadership in the Jerusalem church. This will become more evident in future chapters of Acts.

### **Peter's Escape Discovered Acts 12:18-19**

*Now when day came, there was no small disturbance among the soldiers as to what could have become of Peter. And when Herod had searched for him and had not found him, he examined the guards and ordered that they be led away to execution.*

*And he went down from Judea to Caesarea and was spending time there.*

How could anyone explain the absence of Peter, given all of the precautions taken to assure his remaining in prison? Perhaps Agrippa thought that the guards had been bribed.

According to Roman law, a guard who allowed a prisoner to escape would be given the same penalty that the escaped prisoner would have suffered.<sup>91</sup> Such was the unfortunate fate of the guards who had been responsible for Peter.

Soon after this event, Agrippa left Jerusalem for Caesarea. Caesarea was the seat of government for the Roman authorities in the region. Caesarea was on the seacoast, whereas Jerusalem, was about a half-mile higher than sea level.<sup>92</sup> Therefore, Herod Agrippa is described as, going down to Caesarea. From the time of its founding by Herod the Great, although in Jewish territory, Caesarea was predominately inhabited by Gentiles.

### **The Death of Herod Agrippa Acts 12:20-23 (44 AD)**

*Now he was very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon; and with one accord they came to him, and having won over Blastus the king's chamberlain, they were asking for peace, because their country was fed by the king's country.*

*And on an appointed day Herod, having put on his royal apparel, took his seat on the rostrum and began delivering an address to them.*

*And the people kept crying out, "The voice of a god and not of a man!"*

*And immediately an angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and died.*

The seacoast cities of Phoenicia, Tyre and Sidon, depended on Galilee for their food supply. This harked back to the time of Hiram and Solomon.

*So Hiram sent word to Solomon, saying, "I have heard the message which you have sent me; I will do what you desire concerning the cedar and cypress timber. My servants will bring them down from Lebanon to the sea; and I will make them into rafts to go by sea to the place where you direct me, and I will have them broken up there, and you shall carry them away. Then you shall accomplish my desire by giving food to my household."*

*So Hiram gave Solomon as much as he desired of the cedar and cypress timber.*

*Solomon then gave Hiram 20,000 kors (a kor is about 90 gallons) of wheat as food for his household, and twenty kors of beaten oil; thus Solomon would give Hiram year by year.*

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<sup>91</sup> Code of Justinian 9:4.4

<sup>92</sup> Jerusalem is 2556 feet above sea level.

*And Yahweh gave wisdom to Solomon, just as He promised him; and there was peace between Hiram and Solomon, and the two of them made a covenant. (1 Kings 5:8-12)*

We have no information concerning how the people of Tyre and Sidon had offended Herod Agrippa, but for some reason he had an offense against them. Since they depended on Galilee for their food supply, they realized that it would be wise for them to do what they could to restore their relationship with him.

They were able to enlist the aid of Blastus, Herod's chamberlain.<sup>93</sup> Whatever the cost of Blastus' help, it would be worth it.

This event has historical integrity. The Jewish historian Josephus records this event. He states, *Agrippa, exhibited shows in honor of Caesar, knowing that this was celebrated as a festival for his own welfare. There came together for this occasion a large number of provincial officials and others of distinguished position. On the second day of the shows, Agrippa put on a robe made of silver throughout, of quite wonderful weaving, and entered the theatre at break of day. Then the silver shone and glittered wonderfully as the sun's first rays fell on it and its resplendence inspired a sort of fear and trembling in those who gazed at it. Immediately, his flatterers called out from various directions, in language which boded him no good, for they invoked him as a god: "Be gracious to us!" they cried. "Hitherto we have revered you as a human being, but henceforth we confess you to be of more than mortal nature." He did not rebuke them, nor did he repudiate their impious flattery. But soon afterward, he looked up and saw an owl sitting on a rope above his head, and recognized it at once as a messenger of evil as a former occasion it had been a messenger of good; and a pang of grief pierced his heart. At the same time, he was seized with a severe pain in his bowels, which quickly increased in intensity....He was hastily carried into the palace, and...when he had suffered continuously for five days from the pain in his belly, he died, in the fifty-fourth year of his life, and the seventh year of his kingship.*

Even though the accounts of Luke and Josephus differ in details, and are independent of one another, they agree in all essentials.

Various medical experts have speculated as to the nature of the ailment that befell Herod. There are several possibilities, but the question must remain unanswered. Luke's statement, *consumed by worms*, was used by several ancient writers to describe the deaths of people who were considered worthy of an unpleasant end and died with some bowel disorder.<sup>94</sup>

### **Continued spread of the Gospel and the Return of Those who had taken the famine-relief funds to Jerusalem Acts 12:24-25**

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

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<sup>93</sup> A chamberlain was a senior royal official in charge of managing a royal household. Historically, the chamberlain superintended the arrangement of domestic affairs and was often also charged with receiving and paying out money kept in the royal chamber.

<sup>94</sup> II Maccabees 9:5-12; Josephus, *Antiquities*, 17.168-70; Lucian, *Alexander* 59; Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*.8.1616.3-5 ; Theodoros, *Haereticarum* 3.9

The progress and success of the Gospel are contrasted with the miserable end of the Church's persecutor.

When Barnabas and Saul returned to Antioch from Jerusalem, they brought with them, John/Mark. Recall that his mother's home was the meeting place of the house-church to which Peter came after his miraculous release.

In Colossians 4:10, Paul identifies Mark as Barnabas' cousin.

*Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings; and also Barnabas' cousin Mark (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him);*

Mark will play a role later in the ministry of Barnabas and Saul/Paul.

### **Barnabas and Saul sent out from Antioch Acts 13:1-5**

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

*And while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."*

*Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.*

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

*And when they reached Salamis, they began to proclaim the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews; and they also had John as their helper.*

(see ADDENDUM K for the geographical record of this trip)

The Antioch Church was blessed with the presence of an outstanding leadership. Elders had not, as yet, been chosen and ordained in Antioch. The Church, at this time, was led by a spiritually gifted council of prophets and teachers. In addition to Barnabas and Saul, are listed:

- Simeon, who was called, Niger. *Niger* is the Latin word for *black*. Since that was Simeon's nick name, he must have been a man of dark complexion. We are tempted to identify him with Simon of Cyrene, who carried Jesus' cross (Matthew 27:32; Mark 15:21; Luke 23:26). Yet, this seems improbable, because if this were the same Simon, surely Luke would have indicated such in his narrative. Other than the information given here, we know nothing about this Simon and his spiritual history.
- Lucius of Cyrene. Lucius probably was one of the men from Cyrene who first evangelized Antioch (Acts 11:20). There is no evidence to connect him with the Lucius who was Paul's kinsman, mentioned in Romans 16:21, nor is it probable that he is the author of the third Gospel, who always was called, *Luke*. The name, *Lucius*, was one of eighteen first names usually given to boys in Roman culture.<sup>95</sup> Because it was such a common name, it is not possible to nail down the identity of this Lucius.

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<sup>95</sup> Technically, the term to describe these names is *praenomina*. The *praenomina* was a personal name chosen by the parents of a Roman child. It was first bestowed on the *dies lustricus* (the day of lustration), which was the eighth day after the birth of a girl, or the ninth day after the birth of a boy. The praenomen would then be formally conferred a second time when girls married, or when boys assumed the *toga virilis* upon reaching manhood.

- Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, can be identified. *Manaen* is the Greek form of the Hebrew, *Menahem*, meaning, *comforter*. When boys were brought into the royal court to be reared as companions for royal boys of the same age, they were given the title, *foster brother*. Manaen had been foster-brother to Herod Antipas. What a commentary on the sovereignty and mystery of God's grace, that one of these boys would become an esteemed leader in the church, while the other one would be remembered for his having beheaded John the Baptist, as well as one of the main characters in the trial of Jesus.

As these prophets and teachers were fulfilling their appointed ministries, they considered their ministries to be *ministering to the Lord*. It is important that whatever ministry one might be doing, whether it is feeding the poor or preaching a sermon, that there be a sense of doing it unto the Lord. Jesus' words, describing a day of judgment, come to mind.

*Then the King will say to those on His right,*

*"Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me."*

*Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, "Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You drink? And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? And when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?"*

*And the King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.'* (Matthew 25:34-40)

This brings to mind Paul's exhortations,

*And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.* (Colossians 3:17)

*Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* (1 Corinthians 10:31)

*Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men,* (Ephesians 6:5-7)

We are not told why these prophets and teachers were fasting, but there are indications in the New Testament that Christians were especially sensitive to the Spirit when fasting. It was during this fast that the word probably came through one of them, which would have been affirmed by the others.

The word was clear - *Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them*. When that word was given, there was no specific work mentioned, but shortly it became known.

When they fasted again, this time with a specific focus, and prayed, they laid hands on Barnabas and Saul. The term rendered as *sent them away*, is ἀπολύω (*apolouoh*), which literally means, *released them*. They were released from their responsibilities in Antioch to be free to be led of the Spirit into whatever ministries the Holy Spirit led them.

In the next statement, *being sent out by the Holy Spirit*, the term rendered as, *sent out*, is ἐκπέμπω (*ekpempoh*), which means literally as it is rendered in our text. So, the leaders of the



Church at Antioch *released them* from their ministries at Antioch, to be *sent out* by the Holy Spirit, to wherever the Spirit might direct.

John Mark, whom Barnabas and Saul had brought with them from Jerusalem (Acts 12:45), went with them as their helper.

They would have taken a ship from Seleucia Pieria, the port of Antioch, and sailed for Cyprus. Cyprus had been annexed by Rome in 57 BC. In 22 BC, Augustus transferred control of Cyprus to the Roman senate, and it was administered by a proconsul, whom we will meet shortly in this account.

The first place that they preached was Salamis, a Greek city on the east coast of the Island and the administrative center of the eastern portion of Cyprus. Salamis had a flourishing Jewish community. The Jewish community in Salamis was large enough to have more than one synagogue. Therefore, *they began to proclaim the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews*

In Romans 1:16, Paul spoke of the presentation of the Gospel first to the Jew and then to the Greek. That was the pattern that he and Barnabas followed throughout their ministry.

### **The Confrontation at Paphos Acts 13:6-12**

*And when they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they found a certain magician, a Jewish false prophet whose name was Bar-Jesus, who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence.*

*This man summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God.*

*But Elymas the magician (for thus his name is translated) was opposing them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.*

*But Saul, who was also known as Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze upon him, and said, "You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord?"*

*And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and not see the sun for a time."*

*And immediately a mist and a darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking those who would lead him by the hand.*

*Then the proconsul believed when he saw what had happened, being amazed at the teaching of the Lord.*

We might assume that Barnabas and Saul preached their way from east to west, across Cyprus, until they came to Paphos. Paphos was the administrative seat of the southwest portion of Cyprus.

One of the things for which Paphos was known was its devotion to the Syrian goddess, *Paphian*, which was the Syrian version of the Greek goddess, *Aphrodite*.

The Roman proconsul, Sergius Paulus, heard about the preaching of the two emissaries, which may have stirred a bit of excitement in the Jewish community. So, he summoned them to see what this proclamation was all about.

The Jewish false prophet, Bar-Jesus realized that his place at court would be threatened if the proconsul were to accept the Gospel, as proclaimed by Barnabas and Saul. So, he attempted to defeat the Gospel preachers.

NOTE: The term rendered as *magician*, is μάγος (*magos*). This is the term that is rendered as *wise men*, in the nativity narratives (Matthew 2:1, 7, 16). The *Magi* were respected spiritual

leaders in Persia. They were Gentiles. Therefore, a renegade Jew would not have been a part of the *Magi*. Because Paul described him as a deceiver, he probably was one who used slight-of-hand tricks to deceive the proconsul.

*Elymas*, the alternative name that Luke gave the sorcerer, probably was a Semitic term, equivalent to *magos*. It is not a translation of Bar-Jesus.

As Peter had addressed Simon the sorcerer in Samaria (Acts 8:18ff), so Saul confronted Bar-Jesus in Paphos.

Here, for the first time in Acts, Saul is given his Roman name, *Paul*. From that time onward, this is the name used for him in Acts and in his epistles. It is interesting to note that Luke chose to introduce this name for Saul/Paul in an episode related to the Roman proconsul named, *Paulus*.

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Paul demonstrated great boldness and declared the sorcerer to be a child of the devil, and then he pronounced a negative miracle upon him – blindness.

The proconsul was so impressed when he saw the immediate result of Paul's declaration of blindness on the sorcerer, and being impacted by the Spirit anointed preaching of the Gospel, that he immediately became a believer.

This is reminiscent of the beginning of Our Lord's ministry when the people of Capernaum not only were impressed with the authority of his teaching, but of his healing power (Mark 1:22,27)

We are not given any more information concerning the proconsul. Did he repent, did he give his life to Jesus, was he immersed? We are not told. Luke just quickly proceeds to the next chapter in the saga of this missionary journey.

### **Arrival in Pisidian Antioch Acts 13:13-15**

*Now Paul and his companions put out to sea from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John left them and returned to Jerusalem.*

*But going on from Perga, they arrived at Pisidian Antioch, and on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down.*

*And after the reading of the Law and the Prophets the synagogue officials sent to them, saying, "Brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it."*

Refer to ADDENDUM K for the geographical aspects of this journey.

Note that up this point in the narrative, Barnabas had always been listed first, when describing the team. Here, for the first time, the team is described as, *Paul and his companions*. From point onward in the narrative, Paul's role seems to be more dominant.

Luke does not inform us as to the reason for John Mark's departure. Paul, later, described John Mark's departure as a desertion (Acts 15:36-39). Many exegetes have speculated that since the journey north from Perga, was a dangerous journey, through an area inhabited by robber gangs, that John Mark, being unwilling to face the danger, abandoned the mission. Others speculate that he was homesick and wanted to return to his mother, in Jerusalem. All is purely speculation.

Their Spirit-led destination was Pisidian Antioch. Note that this is the second Antioch in which they ministered, the first being on the Phoenician coast, where they began their ministry together (Acts 11:25ff).

There was a sizeable Jewish community in Antioch, and therefore, a synagogue. So, on the Sabbath, following the practice of to the Jew first and then the Gentile, Saul and Barnabas showed up at the synagogue and took their places among the worshippers.

In the synagogue Sabbath service, there was a specified reading from the Pentateuch, then a reading from the prophets, usually related to the reading in the Pentateuch. The reader/speaker stood, whereas the congregation remained seated. Note that in Nazareth, Jesus stood while reading, made a comment, then sat down (Luke 4:16ff).

The rulers of the synagogue sent someone to ask these visitors from Paphos if they had any *word of exhortation for the people*. They had no idea what that word was, nor what an impact it was going to have on the synagogue.

### **The Historical Preparation for Christ Acts 13:16-22**

*And Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand, he said, "Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen:*

*The God of this people Israel chose our fathers, and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with an uplifted arm He led them out from it.*

*And for a period of about forty years He put up with them in the wilderness.*

*And when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He distributed their land as an inheritance-- all of which took about four hundred and fifty years.*

*And after these things He gave them judges until Samuel the prophet.*

*And then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years.*

*And after He had removed him, He raised up David to be their king, concerning whom He also testified and said, "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My heart, who will do all My will."*

Paul began his address by making a gesture, inviting the audience's attention. He then addressed the congregation respectfully, *men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen*. The fact that he addressed them as *men of Israel* and, *you who fear God*, presents the possibility that both ethnic Jews and Jewish proselytes were members of the synagogue.

His presentation was similar to that of Stephen's in the Jerusalem synagogue, but it was not as lengthy. He recited the history of Israel. He began with the patriarchs, then the deliverance of the nation from Egypt, then God's giving them a country, then the gift of judges and prophets, and then God's granting their request for a king, finally raising up David, who God described as, *a man after My heart, who will do all My will* (see I Samuel 13:14).

This comment concerning David is interesting. Because of David's horrible sin of adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, Uriah (II Samuel 11:3ff), how could he be described by God as *a man after my heart who will do all My will*? The answer lies in the fact that even though David committed serious personal sins, he never disobeyed a direct command from God, nor did he introduce any worship of pagan deities.

David was promised that his kingdom, through his descendants, would be established forever.<sup>96</sup>

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, the psalmist wrote, concerning this pronouncement of God's declaration of the everlasting throne of David:

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<sup>96</sup> II Samuel 7:11-13; Isaiah 9:7; 49:8

*I have found David My servant; With My holy oil I have anointed him, With whom My hand will be established; My arm also will strengthen him.... My lovingkindness I will keep for him forever, And My covenant shall be confirmed to him.*

*So I will establish his descendants forever, And his throne as the days of heaven.*<sup>97</sup>

### **Christ is the Fulfillment of the Promises Acts 13:23-37**

*From the offspring of this man, according to promise, God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, after John had proclaimed before His coming a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And while John was completing his course, he kept saying, "What do you suppose that I am? I am not He. But behold, one is coming after me the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie."*

*Brethren, sons of Abraham's family, and those among you who fear God, to us the word of this salvation is sent out.*

*For those who live in Jerusalem, and their rulers, recognizing neither Him nor the utterances of the prophets which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled these by condemning Him.*

*And though they found no ground for putting Him to death, they asked Pilate that He be executed. And when they had carried out all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the cross and laid Him in a tomb.*

*But God raised Him from the dead; and for many days He appeared to those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, the very ones who are now His witnesses to the people.*

*And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers, that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, "Thou art My Son; today I have begotten Thee."*

*And as for the fact that He raised Him up from the dead, no more to return to decay, He has spoken in this way: "I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David."*

*Therefore He also says in another Psalm, "Thou wilt not allow Thy Holy One to undergo decay."*

*For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers, and underwent decay; but He whom God raised did not undergo decay.*

Paul's sermon follows the same track as did Peters on the Day of Pentecost, with some important variations.

Paul declared that the messianic Scriptures, which were read every Sabbath in the synagogue, were fulfilled in Jesus.

It seems that all Jews of that era knew of John the Baptist, and recognized him as being a true prophet of God. Many of those who heard him thought that he was the Messiah, but he clearly stated that he was only the forerunner.

John clearly declared to two of his disciples, *Behold the Lamb of God* (John 1:35-36). One of these two was Andrew, Peter's brother. The other disciple is unnamed.

The Jewish leaders of Jerusalem clearly did not understand the Old Testament prophecies and so they conspired to kill Jesus, thus, in ignorance, they fulfilled the Old Testament prophetic statements concerning the Messiah.

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<sup>97</sup> Psalm 89:20, 27-29

Unable to find anything by which they could condemn Jesus, they still turned to Pilate to have Jesus executed.

Deuteronomy 21:22-23 declared,

*And if a man has committed a sin worthy of death, and he is put to death, and you **hang him on a tree**, his corpse shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him on the same day (for he who is hanged is accursed of God), so that you do not defile your land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance.*

In the Greek version of the Old Testament, The Septuagint, the word in the above Deuteronomy passage, rendered in most English versions as, *tree*, is ξύλον (*xzulon*). The primary meaning of the word is, *something made from wood*. The term often is used to refer to a *gibbet*, which is an upright post with a protruding arm, from which the body of a criminal was hung as a warning to other criminals. This is the word that is used three times in Acts for the cross upon which Jesus was crucified, Acts 5:30; 10:39, and in the passage before us.

### EXCURSUS

#### ξύλον

The Greek term, ξύλον, referring to something made of wood, is used seventeen times in the New Testament. In each of these instances, the context must determine how the term should be rendered.

- In the first three Gospels, the term is used for the wooden clubs that the soldiers carried, along with their swords, when they came to arrest Jesus (Matthew 26:47, 55; Mark 14:43, 48; Luke 22:52)
- In Acts 16:24, the term is used to describe the wooden stocks that the jailor used to bind the legs of Paul and Silas.
- In I Corinthian 3:12, the term is used to contrast things made on a foundation of wood, hay, and stubble with things made on a foundation that could survive the testing by fire.
- In Revelation 22:2, 14, the term is used to refer to the tree of life.

The crucifixion of Jesus on a wooden cross, truly was a *gibbet*, the ultimate expression of disdain that the Jewish leaders had for Him.

Paul was able to bring a message in a triumphant mood, not only because of the abundant testimonies of those who had seen Jesus during the forty days between His resurrection and ascension, but because of Paul's own personal experience of seeing the resurrected Jesus on the road to Damascus.

Thus, he was able to boldly demonstrate the difference between the death of David and the death of Jesus. The prophetic passage in Psalm 16:10, declaring the promise, *Thou wilt not allow Thy Holy One to undergo decay*, could not have applied to David.

As Paul stated, *David fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers, and underwent decay*. Jesus' body did not decay, but was raised from the tomb, alive for His disciples to see and bear testimony to the fact.

Therefore, the promises made to the patriarchs had now been confirmed to their children. By faith, not only were believing Jews children of Abraham, but, as Paul declared in the Galatian epistle,

*Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.*

*And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "All the nations shall be blessed in you."*

*So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer. (Galatians 3:7-9)*

### **A Warning against Rejecting the Message Acts 13:38-41**

*Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you,*

*and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses.*

*Take heed therefore, so that the thing spoken of in the Prophets may not come upon you:*

*"Behold, you scoffers, and marvel, and perish; For I am accomplishing a work in your days, A work which you will never believe, though someone should describe it to you."*

Usually, a preacher closes a sermon with a message of hope. In this instance, Paul closed his message with a very dire warning.

Paul declared that the blessing for which Israel had been waiting had arrived, even though the Jewish hierarchy did not recognize it. Now, for the first time in the history of the human race, forgiveness of sins could be received through one's trusting in the atoning work of Jesus.

The closing exhortation urged the members of the congregation to make certain that they did not miss the opportunity to receive this gift from God. Hebrews 10:1-12 affirms the truth that Paul presented in his sermon

*For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never by the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect those who draw near.*

*Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins? But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year.*

*For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.*

*Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, "Sacrifice and offering Thou hast not desired, but a body Thou hast prepared for Me; In whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast taken no pleasure."*

*Then I said, "Behold, I have come (In the roll of the book it is written of Me) To do Thy will, O God."*

*After saying above, "Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast not desired, nor hast Thou taken pleasure in them" (which are offered according to the Law), then He said, "Behold, I have come to do Thy will."<sup>98</sup>*

*He takes away the first in order to establish the second.*

*By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins;*

*but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God,*

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<sup>98</sup> The quotations that Hebrews 10:5-9 cites in this passage are quotations of Psalm 40:6-8

### **The Response to Paul's Address Acts 13:42-43**

*And as Paul and Barnabas were going out, the people kept begging that these things might be spoken to them the next Sabbath.*

*Now when the meeting of the synagogue had broken up, many of the Jews and of the God-fearing proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, were urging them to continue in the grace of God.*

No doubt the rulers of the synagogue had listened to Paul's address with misgivings. They dismissed the congregation.

Even so, many of the hearers, both Jew and proselytes, were favorably touched by the message. They had never heard anything like this and begged for a further exposition in the synagogue on the next Sabbath.

A sizeable number of the congregation, both ethnic Jews and Gentile proselytes, followed Paul out of the synagogue. As they walked along, Paul and Barnabas kept urging them to continue in the grace of God, even though they did not fully understand it.

### **The Jewish Authorities, Jealous of the Crowd's Interest in Paul & Barnabas, begin to oppose the Apostles Acts 13:44-52**

*And the next Sabbath nearly the whole city assembled to hear the word of God.*

*But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy, and began contradicting the things spoken by Paul, and were blaspheming.*

*And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.*

*For thus the Lord has commanded us, 'I have placed You as a light for the Gentiles, That You should bring salvation to the end of the earth.'"*

*And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.*

*And the word of the Lord was being spread through the whole region.*

*But the Jews aroused the devout women of prominence and the leading men of the city, and instigated a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district.*

*But they shook off the dust of their feet in protest against them and went to Iconium.*

*And the disciples were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.*

The Gentile proselytes were so excited by Paul's message that they told their friends and neighbors about this amazing revelation. As a result, on the next Sabbath, not only Jews and proselytes, but a significant number of Gentiles showed up for the assembly.

Because of the excitement, the crowd probably was a bit unruly, totally different from the customary reverence in the synagogue, which would have upset the synagogue officials.

Yet, there was another reason for their being upset – the Gentiles seemed disposed to give a favorable response to the message, whereas the synagogue rulers were not so disposed.

Therefore, the synagogue rulers began to contradict Paul, trying to discredit him. Because the text says they blasphemed, they probably would have included the name of Jesus in their derogatory remarks.

Paul declared that it was right and proper for the Jews to receive the message first (as pointed out earlier, this was his custom). Furthermore, if the Jews of the Antiochian synagogue had accepted the message, they could have become the messengers to bring the good news to the entire region.

In this synagogue, we have the record of a pattern that will be repeated in future evangelistic activities:

- The Gospel is first preached to the Jews
- the local corporate Jews will reject it, even so, some Jews of the community will accept it
- then the Gospel is proclaimed to the Gentiles.

The phrase, *appointed unto eternal life*, has been a point of controversy among various exegetes of this passage. For example, F. F. Bruce argues that this means *predestination*,<sup>99</sup> i.e., that God predetermined who would accept the message and those who would not. He points out, correctly, that the verb, τεταγμένος (*tegagmenos*), means to inscribe.

Henry Alford argues that the term should be rendered, *as many as were disposed to eternal life*. Alford writes, “*We know, that it is GOD who worketh in us the will to believe,*<sup>100</sup> and that the preparation of the heart is of Him: but to find *in this text* pre-ordination to life asserted, is to force both the word and the context to a meaning which they do not contain.”<sup>101</sup>

In my opinion (JWG), the sense of this expression reflects the foreknowledge of God. God is able to look down through the centuries and see who will respond favorably to the presentation of the Gospel. Based on that foreknowledge, He inscribes those names in the Book of Life. The decision is up to the individual, whom God foresees and thus, foreknows. This view is consistent with Paul’s statement in Romans

*For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren;* (Romans 8:29)

Peter affirms the view that God does not predestine anyone to hell.

*The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.* (II Peter 3:9)

The Greek words for *wish*, or *desire*, are θέλω (*theloh*) and θέλημα (*thelayma*).

The term rendered as *wishing*, in this II Peter passage is, βούλομαι (*boulomai*). This is the term used in the Greek New Testament for God’s immutable and irresistible will. Peter is stating that God has not predestined for anyone to go to hell. However, many, perhaps most, will go to hell. As Jesus stated, *For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it.* (Matthew 7:14)

Also, Jesus lamented over Jerusalem’s failure to accept God’s gracious offer (Matt. 23:37; Luke 13:34)

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<sup>99</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament, The Book of Acts* (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing) 1988, footnote 111, page 267.

<sup>100</sup> Alford is loosely paraphrasing and accommodating Philippians 2:13 *for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.*

<sup>101</sup> Henry Alford, *The Greek New Testament* (London, Guardian Press) Second Edition 1976, comments on Acts 13:48



A reasonable view is that when the Gospel is presented, the hearer is dead in his sinful condition (Ephesians 2:1) and unable to respond. The Holy Spirit frees the hearer, from this inability to respond, but He does not determine the hearer's response. The hearer must respond to the message, either negatively or positively. This is the view put forth by Arminius when he began to sense that there was a flaw in his historic Calvinism.<sup>102</sup> It also is the view adopted by John Wesley.

This also would be in sync with the description of Lydia, the first convert to Christianity on the continent of Europe.

*And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled. And a certain woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul. (Acts 16:13-14)*

God opened Lydia's heart to respond, but God did not dictate what that response would be.

When the Gospel is preached, God opens the door, but each person must choose to go through the door. God does not compel one to do so.

Almost immediately, not only in the city of Antioch, but in the surrounding countryside, the believers began to proclaim the truth that they had received from Paul. The Jewish leaders could not prevent the Gentiles from accepting the Gospel, but they could make it too hot for the apostles to continue their work. They did this by prejudicing the local government authorities against Paul and Barnabas.

Many wealthy women throughout the Roman world were attracted to the Jewish religion and were among the devoted proselytes who frequented the synagogues. Evidently these women induced their husbands to begin a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, forcing them to leave the district.

Jesus had instructed His disciples who went forth to preach,

*"And as for those who do not receive you, as you go out from that city, shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them." (Luke 9:5)*

*"But whatever city you enter and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your city which clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you; yet be sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come near.'" (Luke 10:10-11)*

Therefore, being forced to leave Pisidian Antioch, Paul and Barnabas made the gesture that Jesus had commanded. The gesture did not mean that had totally broken off relations with the city, because they left a considerable body of believers there and revisited Pisidian Antioch later (Acts 14:12)

Even though Paul and Barnabas were forced out of the city, those who had come to believe, thus forming the first church in Antioch, were *continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.*

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<sup>102</sup> James Arminius (Jacob Harmenszoon), born in 1559 in Oudewater - a small city in the province of Holland, is undoubtedly the most famous theologian ever produced by the Dutch Reformed Church. His fame is a great irony since the Dutch Reformed Church historically was a bastion of strict Calvinism, and Arminius has given his name to a movement very much in opposition to historic Calvinism.

Their faith, their sense of God's presence, and their confidence, did not depend on the presence of the apostolic band. They now had a deep relationship with God, not just with anointed men.

When the apostles left Antioch, they took the road eastward, toward Iconium (ADDENDUM K).

### **Adventures in Iconium Acts 14:1-7**

*And it came about that in Iconium they entered the synagogue of the Jews together, and spoke in such a manner that a great multitude believed, both of Jews and of Greeks.*

*But the Jews who disbelieved stirred up the minds of the Gentiles, and embittered them against the brethren.*

*Therefore, they spent a long time there speaking boldly with reliance upon the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting that signs and wonders be done by their hands.*

*But the multitude of the city was divided; and some sided with the Jews, and some with the apostles.*

*And when an attempt was made by both the Gentiles and the Jews with their rulers, to mistreat and to stone them, they became aware of it and fled to the cities of Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe, and the surrounding region;*

*and there they continued to preach the gospel.*

Once again, the apostolic team followed their usual practice of going to the Jews first – they immediately went to the synagogue. There were both ethnic Jews and God-fearing Gentiles (proselytes) in the synagogue. Their presentation was anointed and as a result, there was an immediate positive response. Many, Jews and proselytes accepted their message.

However, as was true in the past, the unbelieving Jewish authorities did all that they could to prejudice the local governmental authorities against Paul and Barnabas.

It seems that it took a long time for the opposition to become serious enough to deter the preachers, and so they continued to preach boldly, relying not on their oratorical skills but on the anointing of the Lord, who, not only bore witness to the preached word, but also granted the preachers the gift of signs and wonders. Again, miraculous wonders were agents of evangelism.

The presence of these apostles and their message had gained so much attention, that the entire city became divided into two camps: pro-apostles and anti-apostles.

As had happened in Antioch, the local powers began to devise a plan to arrest them and execute them. When the apostles learned of the plot, they fled to the surrounding cities.

Even so, they left behind a body of believers who could carry in the task of evangelizing the city.

The apostles then traveled to other Lycaonian cities. Two are mentioned, Lystra and Derbe, but they also preached in the region surrounding these cities.

The first city mentioned is Lystra, which is short distance south of Iconium.

### **Miraculous Healing at Lystra Acts 14:8-18**

*And at Lystra there was sitting a certain man, without strength in his feet, lame from his mother's womb, who had never walked.*

*This man was listening to Paul as he spoke, who, when he had fixed his gaze upon him, and had seen that he had faith to be made well, said with a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet." And he leaped up and began to walk.*

*And when the multitudes saw what Paul had done, they raised their voice, saying in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have become like men and have come down to us."*

*And they began calling Barnabas, Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker.*

*And the priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds.*

*But when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of it, they tore their robes and rushed out into the crowd, crying out and saying,*

*"Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you, and preach the gospel to you in order that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them.*

*And in the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways; and yet He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness."*

*And even saying these things, they with difficulty restrained the crowds from offering sacrifice to them.*

This miraculous healing is similar to the episode in which Peter healed the lame man at the Temple in Jerusalem (3:2-10). Even as was true in that earlier episode, this lame man was known to all residents of the area.

Paul could see something in the man's demeanor that revealed that he was believing the message that Paul was preaching. Paul discerned that his faith was such that a healing awaited him. Whereas there are accounts of healing by laying on of hands, in this instance there was no laying on of hands. Paul loudly gave the man a command to stand up and instantly he stood up, fully healed.

The response of the crowd was different than what they had experienced anywhere else. There was absolutely no opposition, but just the opposite – they were declared to be gods.

- Barnabas, being the older man, they declared to be Zeus, the father of the gods and men. He was regarded as the city's protector. His temple was just outside the city gates.
- Paul was declared to be Hermes, who was the messenger of the gods. According to their religion, Hermes was the son of Zeus and Maia (Roman name for Hermes was Mercury).

These were not Roman citizens who would have spoken Latin, but they were native Anatolians who spoke in the Lycaonian language. It seems that the apostles did not, at first, understand what was being said by the crowd. Great preparations were made to honor them as gods, before the apostles understood what was happening.

When the apostles realized what was happening, they rushed out of where they were staying and tore their clothes, which was a Jewish expression of horror at the blasphemy being planned by the crowd.

They protested that they were not gods, but rather messengers of God, sent to bring to them the news of the One True God.

The message being declared to this audience was different from that presented to Jews and God-fearing proselytes. These pagans first had to be taught what the Jews already knew.

Paul declared that this One True God had been patient with the nations, even supplying them with rain and harvests, satisfying their hungers with food and gladness.

Even so, the apostles had difficulty persuading the crowds to stop this blasphemous plan.

**Persecuted in Lystra, the Apostles Go To Derbe, Then Retrace Their Steps Acts 14:19-23**  
(see ADDENDUM K)

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

*But while the disciples stood around him, he arose and entered the city. And the next day he went away with Barnabas to Derbe.*

*And after they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."*

*And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.*

The Jews from Antioch and Iconium, so angry with Paul and Barnabas, and the influence that they had exerted in their cities, when they learned of their whereabouts they pursued them with vengeful hatred. They were determined to kill the apostles, if possible, and put an end to their disturbing ministry.

There is no mention of a community of Jews or of a synagogue in Lystra, but it would have been difficult for outsiders to gain the cooperation of the Lystra community, if there had not been a sizeable community of Jews in that city.

A further element that might have contributed to the success of the crusade against Paul (who was the public figure on the apostolic team) was that the people of Lystra may have been a bit offended when Paul and Barnabas refused to accept the praises and divine offers of those who sought to make them gods.

The Jews from Antioch and Iconium achieved their goal. They were able to win over the general population and, as so often happens with crowds, their anger resulted in what they desired. Paul was stoned, dragged out of the city, and left for dead.

Paul later referred to this incident. In II Corinthians 11:25, recounting what he had endured for the cross, Paul wrote, *three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep.*

In Galatians 6:17, he wrote, *for I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus.* No doubt, these scars included those that had resulted from this stoning.

The fact that there were disciples surrounding him as he lay on the ground, indicates that some in the city truly believed and had been among those who tried to make Paul and Barnabas pagan gods.

Whether Paul was mistakenly left for dead, or really dead, must be a matter of speculation. Even so, there is the atmosphere of the miraculous in Paul's standing up and walking back into the city and then walking to Derbe, which was about sixty miles southeast of Lystra.

We do not know how long the mission to Derbe lasted, but there was a significant harvest of souls, in response to the preaching.

Leaving Derbe, the team retraced its steps to visit the churches that existed in Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch. Some speculate that the magistrates in these cities had changed, and thus, the apostolic team was able to return to these locations and complete their task.

The first reason for their return was to encourage the embryonic church in each location.

The second reason for these visits, was to install the essential local church government in each of the cities. In each city, they installed elders to shepherd and lead the churches.

The term rendered, *appoint* (NAS & NIV), *ordain*, (KJV) is, Χαίροτονέω (*chairotoneoh*). The literal meaning of the term is, *to stretch out the hand*. This implies their laying hands on the new elders, and thus, ordaining them.

In each of these churches, enough time had passed for the Holy Spirit to make obvious, which men in the congregation were called to the role, which is described in Scripture as, *elder*, *overseer*, and *teacher*. Later in Acts 20, Paul called the elders of the church in Ephesus to come to him, while he was in Miletus waiting for a ship to carry him to Jerusalem. Here are important terms in this account.

- *And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him **the elders of the church**.* (Acts 20:17)
- *"Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you **overseers**, to **shepherd** the church of God which He purchased with His own blood."* (Acts 20:28)

These terms are consistent with what Paul had written to the Ephesian Church (Ephesians 4:11). *And He gave,*

- *some as apostles, and*
- *some as prophets, and*
- *some as evangelists, and*
- *some as shepherds and teachers*

The Greek construction of Ephesians 4:11, indicates that apostles, prophets, and evangelists, are three distinct gifts that Christ has given to the Church.

On the other hand, the Greek construction of Ephesians 4:11, indicates that those referenced as shepherds and teachers are a single gift - a single group of men who have the responsibility to shepherd and teach the congregation.

### EXCURSUS

#### The significance of the $\mu\epsilon\nu\dots\delta\epsilon$ pattern in Ephesians 4:11

The Latter Rain Movement, which originated in Canada in 1948, taught that a latter rain of the Holy Spirit had fallen, and that the Spirit had restored the *five-fold* gifts of Ephesians 4:11:

- apostles
- prophets
- evangelists
- pastors
- teachers

These brothers did not understand the Greek construction of the passage, nor how the translators had sought to convey that construction in the wording they used to render the

passage, i.e., four of the elements preceded by *some as*, and the absence of *some as*, preceding *teachers*.

Another point of interest is that the term, *pastor*, is the result of Jerome's late Fourth Century translation of the Greek into Latin, which became the Vulgate Bible, the official Bible of the Roman Catholic Church. Jerome did a good job of translating the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures into Latin. The Latin word for *shepherd* is, *pastor*. Most English versions of the Bible have kept several of Jerome's Latin terms, rather than translating them into English. Two of the most prominent are *tabernacle*, which is the Latin for *tent*, and as noted above, *pastor*, the Latin word for *shepherd*.

The failure to translate the Greek into English has produced the contemporary ecclesiology, in which a local church is led by a pastor, rather than by a council of elders.

Ephesians 4:11 displays the *μεν....δε* Greek construction. This construction indicates a sense of dividing the elements in the list with the idea, *on the one hand....on the other hand*.<sup>103</sup>

Here is the passage in the Greek text, with relevant terms in bold text.

Καὶ αὐτὸς ἔδωκεν τὸς μὲν ἀποστόλους, τὸς δὲ προφήτας,

And He Himself gave on the one hand, some as apostles and on the other hand, some as prophets

τὸς δὲ εὐαγγελιστάς, τὸς δὲ ποιμένας καὶ διδασκάλους

and on the other hand, some as evangelists and on the other hand, some as shepherds and teachers

Note that there is not a *δε* between shepherds (*ποιμένας*) and teachers (*διδασκάλους*).

Thus, it is evident that there were four gifts that the ascended Christ gave to the Church. Also note that He did not give offices to be filled, but He gave individuals who were apostles, prophets, evangelists and shepherd/teachers.

With prayer and fasting, the apostles appointed/ordained these elders, then they commended them to the Lord and continued their journey back to Syrian Antioch, from which they had been sent out, originally.

### **The Return to Antioch Acts 14:24-28** (see ADDENDUM K)

*And they passed through Pisidia and came into Pamphylia.*

*And when they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia;*

*and from there they sailed to Antioch, from which they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had accomplished.*

*And when they had arrived and gathered the church together, they began to report all things that God had done with them and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.*

*And they spent a long time with the disciples.*

Traveling from north to south, the team arrived in the port of Perga. They briefly preached there, then boarded a ship and sailed back to Syrian Antioch.

The Antioch Church was eager to receive the report of the events experienced on this very historic journey. They would have shared in both the responsibility and the glory for the trip.

<sup>103</sup> Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan) 1996, page 672

Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch as a part of the Church in that city.

### **The First General Council of the Church Acts 15:1-35**

Throughout the history of the Church there have been several general councils of the Church. These were convened when various doctrinal issues had become divisive and/or challenged the authority of Church leadership. See ADDENDUM L for a list of those that occurred through the Fourth Century and the matters that caused them to be convened.

### **Judaizers Insist that Gentile Converts be Circumcised Acts 15:1-5**

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

*And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.*

*Therefore, being sent on their way by the church, they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and were bringing great joy to all the brethren.*

*And when they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them.*

*But certain ones of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed, stood up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses."*

The growth of Christianity among the Gentiles was so phenomenal, that the more conservative among the Jewish Christians became concerned. Perhaps their concern was that the moral standards of the Church might decline if Gentiles with pagan backgrounds began to dominate the Church. Paul's letters to various non-Palestinian churches indicate that such concerns were not unfounded.

Also, in Jerusalem, the local church would face growing opposition if the Church began to display growing disregard for the Mosaic traditions.

Since Antioch was the Mother Church for the ministry of Paul and Barnabas among the Gentiles, that would be the place to put an end, to what these Jerusalem Jewish Christians saw as apostasy. Therefore, the Judaizers from Jerusalem traveled to Antioch, with the goal of enforcing Mosaic circumcision on all Gentile converts. What they were doing was applying the same rule to Gentile converts to Christianity, that was applied to Gentiles who became Jewish proselytes - they had to be circumcised. Perhaps they could not conceive of God's approval of Gentiles without their first becoming Jewish proselytes.

When the Antioch Church leaders were faced with this on-going dissention, they wanted to settle the issue once and for all. They wisely realized that the way to do that was to get a decision from the apostles and elders of the Mother Church in Jerusalem.

Note that this is the first time that elders are mentioned as being in co-leadership with the apostles in Jerusalem (*should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue*).

We do not know when these Jerusalem elders were chosen and ordained, but from this time forward, they were the Church government in Jerusalem. They shared the governmental role with the apostles, as long as any apostles remained in Jerusalem. When none of the apostles were left in Jerusalem, the elders were the governing authority in the local church.

As the Antioch delegation traveled south toward Jerusalem, they passed through regions where churches had been planted. The delegation described to these churches the great numbers of Gentiles who had become converts to the Faith. This produced great rejoicing in every place that they visited.

However, in Jerusalem they had a different experience. Immediately they were faced with the same problem that they had faced in Antioch. Pharisees who had become believers began to insist that all Gentile converts had to be circumcised and keep the Mosaic Law. No doubt these Pharisee converts were sincere in their conviction. Even though they would have known about Peter's experience in the home of Cornelius (Acts 10), the issue as to whether or not Gentile converts had to be circumcised, had not been officially addressed. The time had come to resolve the issue once and for all.

#### EXCURSUS

#### **Does Galatians 2:1-10 describe the same visit of Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem as is described in Acts 15?**

*Then after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also.*

*And it was because of a revelation that I went up;*

*and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but I did so in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain.*

*But not even Titus who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.*

*But it was because of the false brethren who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage.*

*But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you.*

*But from those who were of high reputation (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)-- well, those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me.*

*But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised (for He who effectually worked for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles),*

*and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we might go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised.*

*They only asked us to remember the poor-- the very thing I also was eager to do.*

*(Galatians 2:1-10)*

Some exegetes contend that the trip described in Galatians 2:1-10 is the same visit that is described in Acts 15. This seems to be improbable.

**PURPOSE:**



- The trip described in Galatians was to affirm the apostleship of Paul to the Gentiles.
- The trip described in Acts 15 was to determine whether or not Gentile converts had to be circumcised and follow the dietary laws of the Mosaic Covenant.

#### THE SETTING:

- The trip described in Galatians involved a private meeting between Paul and apostolic leaders in Jerusalem.
- The Acts 15 trip resulted in a very public meeting in which the issues related to Gentile conversion were officially settled before the entire church.

### **The Council Meets and Listens to Testimonies Acts 15:6-12**

*And the apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter.*

*And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them,*

*"Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.*

*And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith.*

*Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?*

*But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are."*

*And all the multitude kept silent, and they were listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were relating what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.*

Again, note that the responsible leaders were the apostles and the elders.

We have no way of knowing which apostles were still in Jerusalem. Those who were accessible were brought together for this important consultation. Peter, who was a major player in the meeting, possibly had returned from his ministry among the Jews of the dispersion.

These responsible leaders were not the only individuals in the meeting, but as will be seen below, verse 22 states that the whole church was present and affirmed the decision that was made.

Peter recounted his experience in the home of Cornelius (Acts 10), which would have been difficult to refute. The congregation quietly listened to this man whom many recognized as being of primary importance in the foundational elements of the Church.

Peter's use of the term, *yoke*, is very pertinent. A proselyte to Judaism was instructed to *take up the yoke of the kingdom of heaven*. This meant that they were to recite the *Shema*, the Jewish confession of faith – *"Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.* (Deuteronomy 6:4-5)<sup>104</sup>

Then, Barnabas and Paul gave their glorious report of all that God had done through them among the Gentiles. Note the order in which Luke reports their names – Barnabas, then Paul – which was appropriate for the respect that the Jerusalem church had for Barnabas.

<sup>104</sup> It appears in this sense in Mishnah *Berdkot* 2:2, along with the expression, "to take upon oneself the yoke of the commandments, by reciting them.

Barnabas and Paul testified that the blessing that God had bestowed on the Gentiles when Peter preached in the home of Cornelius, had been further displayed in the blessing He had bestowed on Gentile believers in Antioch, Cyprus, and Asia Minor.

Note that Barnabas and Paul spoke as witnesses, not as consultants or participants in the debate. In Jerusalem, their words would not carry the weight carried by Peter's testimony.

Even Peter's words were not decisive. One more important voice remained to be heard.

### **James' Summary and Conclusion Acts 15:13-21**

*And after they had stopped speaking, James answered, saying, "Brethren, listen to me. Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name.*

*And with this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written,*

*'After these things I will return, And I will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen, And I will rebuild its ruins, And I will restore it, in order that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, And all the Gentiles who are called by My name,'*

*Says the Lord, who makes these things known from of old.*

*Therefore, it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood. For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath."* (Acts 15:13-21)

All eyes turned to James, the half-brother of Our Lord Jesus.<sup>105</sup> Although not one of the original apostles, James enjoyed wide respect and confidence in the Jerusalem Church. Records of his ongoing role in the Jerusalem Church, indicate that he was *primus inter pares* – *the first among equals*, among the Jerusalem based leaders.

Josephus, the Jewish historian, wrote that the Jewish population had great respect for James. He had this respect because of his ascetic way of life and his regular participation in temple services, in which he interceded for the people and their city. Whatever Peter and the other members of the apostolic leaders may have done, James was free of being suspected of fraternizing with Gentiles. James was killed in 62 A.D., at the insistence of the High Priest, Ananus II. When James was killed, many of the Jerusalem population were shocked. Some years later, some citizens of Jerusalem ascribed the calamity that overtook their city and its inhabitants to cessation of James' prayers.<sup>106</sup> (For an account of the death of James, see ADDENDUM M)

When James said, *listen to me*, they listened.

Note two interesting things in James' summary.

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<sup>105</sup> Matthew 13:53-55 lists Jesus' brothers as James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas (not Iscariot). James, who was one of the twelve apostles, was the brother of the apostle, John, and he was executed by Herod, several years before this event (Acts 12:2)

<sup>106</sup> Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book II, Chapter 23 (Grand Rapids, Baker Bookhouse) 1994, pages 75-77; Josephus, *Complete Works: Antiquities* Book 20, Chapter 19, section 1 (Grand Rapids, Kregel Publications) 1981, pages

- First note that he did not refer to the testimony of Barnabas and Saul. It was the activity of these two that had caused the controversy in the first place. He only summarized Peter's speech.
- Also, note that he used Peter's original Hebrew/Aramaic form of Peter's name – *Simeon* (i.e., *Simon* – Matthew 16:16-17).

James' approach would have removed barriers between what he was saying and those who were sensitive to the issues involved.

James quoted Amos 9:11-12, stating that God's initiative on behalf of the Gentiles had been foretold by the prophets, *all of the Gentiles who are called by My Name*.

Having listened to Peter, Barnabas, and Paul, and in the light of the statement in Amos, James concluded that circumcision had been removed as a barrier between converted Gentiles and Christian Jews. However, there were some things that could be asked of Gentiles, in order to remove any barrier between Gentile Christians and Jewish Christians.

James, being especially sensitive to the Jewish point of view, wisely advised that in order to facilitate social intercourse between Gentile Christians and Jewish Christians, the Gentiles should avoid food that had any idolatrous relationship and the flesh of animals from which the blood had not been completely drained.<sup>107</sup> Also, that they should conform to the Jewish code of relations between the sexes instead of reflecting the pagan standards to which Gentiles had become accustomed.

James assured the congregation that this would not interfere with Israel's Jahvistic mission to the Gentile world, because the Law of Moses was peached every Sabbath in every synagogue throughout the world. Thus, there would be ample opportunity for Gentiles to learn the Law of Moses.

## EXCURSUS

### Paul's Comments on James' Request Concerning Dietary Practices

Paul later affirmed James' concern, given that many of the Jewish converts had a problem of conscience in violating the Mosaic dietary laws. He wrote to the Romans, *Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this-- not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.*<sup>14</sup> *I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.*<sup>15</sup> *For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died.*<sup>16</sup> *Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil;*<sup>17</sup> *for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*<sup>18</sup> *For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men.*<sup>19</sup> *So then let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.* (Romans 14:13-19)

In other writings, Paul made it clear that these matters had nothing to do with salvation

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<sup>107</sup> This restriction had first been given to Noah, immediately after the flood (Genesis 9:3-4). This prohibition was reiterated in the Mosaic Covenant (Leviticus 17:10; Deuteronomy 12:16, 23-25)

*Therefore let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day-- If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, <sup>21</sup> "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!" (Colossians 2:16, 20-21)*

*But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, <sup>2</sup> by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, <sup>3</sup> men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods, which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. <sup>4</sup> For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it is received with gratitude; <sup>5</sup> for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer. (1 Timothy 4:1-5)*

### **The Jerusalem Letter to Gentile Christians Acts 15:22-29**

*Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas-- Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren,*

*and they sent this letter by them, "The apostles and the brethren who are elders, to the brethren in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia who are from the Gentiles, greetings.*

*Since we have heard that some of our number to whom we gave no instruction have disturbed you with their words, unsettling your souls, it seemed good to us, having become of one mind, to select men to send to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*Therefore we have sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will also report the same things by word of mouth.*

*For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials: that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell."*

James' summary and reasoning brought unity to the Jerusalem congregation.

The leaders of the church then selected two of their number to go to Antioch and carry the decision of the council to the church in that city. These men would accompany Paul and Barnabas, but because they were sent as delegates from the Jerusalem church, their report would carry authority that a report by Paul and Barnabas would not have carried.

Judas (also called Barsabbas<sup>108</sup>) does not appear outside of this context. Silas is mentioned as a companion of Paul in the evangelization of Philippi, Thessalonica, and Corinth.<sup>109</sup>

Not only were Silas and Judas to orally communicate the findings of the Jerusalem council, but they carried an authoritative letter to be read to church at Antioch. The letter was addressed to the Gentile Christians of Antioch and the united province of Syria-Cilicia, of which Antioch was the capital.

<sup>108</sup> The name, *Barsabbas*, means, *son of return*, or *son of rest*.

<sup>109</sup> Silas is identical with the Silvanus of Paul's letters (II Corinthians 1:19; I Thessalonians 1:1; II Thessalonians 1:1. Whether or not he is the Silvanus of I Peter 5:12, is uncertain.

Because Barnabas and Paul had been seen as instigators of the problem, the note affirmed these two men as those who had faced serious hazards in their work of evangelization among the Gentiles.

The church leaders of Jerusalem were so conscious of being possessed and controlled by the Holy Spirit in their decision that they mentioned the Spirit as the first author of the decision... *it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us.*

### **The Church at Antioch Receives the Letter from Jerusalem Acts 15:30-35**

*So, when they were sent away, they went down to Antioch; and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter.*

*And when they had read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement.*

*And Judas and Silas, also being prophets themselves, encouraged and strengthened the brethren with a lengthy message.*

*And after they had spent time there, they were sent away from the brethren in peace to those who had sent them out.*

*[But it seemed good to Silas to remain there].<sup>110</sup>*

*And Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and preaching, with many others also, the word of the Lord.*

The Antioch congregation experienced great relief when the letter was read to them. The restrictions in the letter did not seem too burdensome, and they were a small price to pay for the prevention of any more occurrences of the problems caused by earlier visitors from Jerusalem.

Table fellowship between Jewish and Gentile believers could be resumed.

In addition to the encouragement from the letter, the church received added encouragement from the ministry of Judas and Silas.

When Judas and Silas departed from Antioch, it was with the Antiochenes' farewell, *Peace be with you!* sounding in their ears (see footnote 110).

Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch a little longer, serving the church along with their Antiochian colleagues.

### **Paul and Barnabas Part Company and Paul Takes Silas as His Colleague Acts 15:36-41**

*And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are."*

*And Barnabas was desirous of taking John, called Mark, along with them also.*

*But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work.*

*And there arose such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus.*

*But Paul chose Silas and departed, being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord. And he was traveling through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.*

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<sup>110</sup> This verse (verse 34 – *And it seemed good to Silas to remain there*) is not present in most older manuscripts. This verse probably was added by copyists to account for the presence of Silas in Antioch in verse 40. Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (New York, London, United Bible Societies) 1971, page 439

When Paul proposed to Barnabas that they should revisit the churches that they had planted during their tour of Cyprus and central Anatolia, Barnabas quickly agreed. However, a serious argument ensued, when Barnabas proposed that they take John Mark with them, as they had done on their first missionary journey.

Paul strongly disagreed. He viewed Mark's departure from the team as being totally unjustified (Acts 13:13). Mark had deserted them when they were entering into the same region that they were going to revisit on this proposed journey.

Their disagreement was so severe, that these two men, who had been through so much together, parted company.

The account of this sharp disagreement between these two giants of the faith, may seem surprising, but it does highlight the truth that Paul had shouted to the people of Lystra, when they declared that Paul and Barnabas gods - *We are also men of the same nature as you.*

This is a truth that must never be forgotten. Even the most esteemed of saintly men and women, are human beings with feelings like other human beings.

A question presents itself, at this point in the narrative. The last information that was given in Acts, concerning John Mark, was that he had returned to Jerusalem.

- Did he return to Antioch with Barnabas and Paul, following the Jerusalem conference? He may have done so, but there is no record of his having done so.
- Had he, for some other reason, returned to Antioch? He may have done so, but there is no record of his having done so.
- Did Barnabas go to Jerusalem and fetch Mark, in order to take him on the journey to Cyprus? He may have done so, but there is no record of his having done so.

How Barnabas obtained John Mark to be his traveling companion is a question that has to remain unanswered.

A similar question relates to Silas' being in Antioch. Acts 15:33, informs us that, following a time of significant ministry in Antioch, Silas and Judas returned to Jerusalem (see footnote 110)

- Did Silas, contemplating the spiritual life he encountered at Antioch and his role there, decide to return to Antioch? There is no record of his having done so.
- Did Paul travel back to Jerusalem and recruit Silas to be his traveling companion? There is no record of his having done so.

As is true of the question concerning Mark's presence in Antioch, the question of Silas' presence in Antioch also must remain unanswered.

Whatever the answer to these two questions might be, Barnabas and Paul parted company.

- Barnabas, taking John Mark as his co-worker, departed for Cyprus to continue the evangelization of his native island.
- Paul, taking Silas as his co-worker, departed on a tour of the churches he and Barnabas had planted in Syria and Cilicia.

The results of Mark's time with his cousin, Barnabas, resulted in Mark's becoming a valuable presence in Paul's later life. Recall that *Barnabas*, was the nickname given to *Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth* (Acts 4:36). Also, recall that the name, *Barnabas*, means, *son of encouragement.*

Obviously Joseph was a man who by his demeanor and nature encouraged people and assisted them in their spiritual growth. He had displayed this trait when he vouched for Paul, during Paul's first visit to Jerusalem after his conversion (Acts 9:27).

Evidence of Barnabas' good influence on Mark is seen in Paul's later letters, in which Mark is cited as one of Paul's companions.

- Colossians 4:10 *Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings; and also Barnabas' cousin Mark (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him);*
- Philemon 1:23-24 *Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow workers.*

Later, as Paul saw the end of his life as approaching, he asked for Mark to be brought to him.

- II Timothy 4:9-11 *Make every effort to come to me soon; for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service.*

Paul and Silas, with the blessing of the Antioch Church, launched into the ministry trip that Paul had first proposed to Barnabas – visiting the churches that he and Barnabas had planted in Syria and Cilicia.

### **Paul and Silas visit Southern Galatia; Timothy joins the Team and the Churches Grow in Faith and Number Acts 16:1-5**

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

*And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek, and he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium.*

*Paul wanted this man to go with him; and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.*

*Now while they were passing through the cities, they were delivering the decrees, which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem, for them to observe.*

*So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily.*

Note that the opening statement, *he came*, referring to Paul, indicates that Paul was the leader with Silas following Paul's lead.

Paul and Silas would have passed through Cilicia, then crossed the Taurus Mountain range through the pass called *the Cilician Gates*. They eventually entered the southern regions of Galatia. There they visited the cities that had been evangelized by Paul and Barnabas, two years previously – Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and probably, Pisidian Antioch.

At Lystra they met a young man, Timothy, whose mother had come to faith in Christ during the previous missionary visit of Paul and Barnabas. Not only did the brothers at Lystra speak highly of Timothy, but the brothers from nearby Iconium also knew him. He had established a firm reputation as a devoted follower of Christ.

The statement that his mother (named Eunice in I Timothy 1:5) had married a Gentile presents the possibility that there was less social segregation among the Jews of central Asia Minor than

among those of Palestine. William Ramsey states, that in Phrygia, “There can be little doubt that the Jews married into dominant families.”<sup>111</sup>

It had been clearly established by the Jerusalem council that circumcision was not required of Gentile converts, and Paul totally opposed circumcising Gentile believers, such as Titus (Galatians 2:3-6). Even so, Paul realized that Timothy’s mixed parentage might be a barrier to evangelizing the Jews in some areas. Therefore, in order to remove that barrier, he circumcised Timothy.

I Timothy 4:14-18 and II Timothy 1:6, indicate that both the elders of his home church and Paul laid hands on Timothy as he embarked on this career as a missionary. When hands were laid on Timothy, ordaining him for this ministry, he received the giftings needed to achieve the purposes of that ministry.

- I Timothy 4:14 *Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed upon you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery.*
- II Timothy 1:6 *And for this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.*

From 15:40 until 16:4, all of the verbs are been singular. Literally, 15:40 states, *But Paul chose Silas and he departed, he being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord.*

At the close of this passage (16:4) the plural is used, *Now while they were passing through the cities, they were delivering the decrees, which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem, for them to observe.*

As a representative of the Church at Jerusalem, it was Silas’ duty to deliver the decrees, not Paul’s.

- Acts 15:22 *Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas-- Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren,*
- Acts 15:27 *Therefore we have sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will also report the same things by word of mouth.*

This report of the progress of the churches concludes the south Galatian phase of Luke’s narrative.. The next scene of action is in the Aegean world.

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<sup>111</sup> W. M. Ramsey, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament* (Whitefish Montana, Kissinger Publishing LLC) 2007 page 357



### **The Call from Macedonia. Acts 16:6-10**

*And they passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia;*

*and when they had come to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them;*

*and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas.*

*And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a certain man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."*

*And when he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.*

For a map of the region mentioned in this section, see ADDENDUM N

Paul's journeys were a combination of careful planning and sensitivity to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. No doubt he planned for the team (Paul, Silas, and Timothy) to first visit the churches that he and Barnabas had planted in south Galatia, then travel west toward Ephesus. In all probability, Paul planned to evangelize the eastern shore of the Aegean by planting a church in Ephesus, *that great metropolis in which the East looked down upon the West.*<sup>112</sup>

However, the Holy Spirit had a destination that overshadowed these plans. Their plans to evangelize Asian cities were vetoed by the Holy Spirit. So, they thought that they would travel north, to Bithynia, but that plan also was vetoed.

Having walked many miles without being permitted to evangelize any of these regions, the team finally arrived at Troas, on the Aegean Sea. They had come to the end of the road – what was next?

No doubt they were somewhat puzzled by the fact that the Holy Spirit kept turning them away from fields of labor that appeared to be very promising.

The Holy Spirit, through a dream given to Paul, ended the vetoing of their intentions with a night vision of a Macedonian asking the team to *come over to Macedonia and help us.*

Immediately, sensing the leading of the Holy Spirit, the evangelistic team set their sights on the western shores of the Aegean Sea. They set sail for Macedonia.

Note that Luke describes the team that departed for Macedonia, as, **we** *sought to go into Macedonia*. Luke had joined the team. We are not given any information concerning Luke's joining the team. From this point onward in Luke's narrative, **we**, is the term that he usually uses for the team.

### **The Team Travels to Philippi and Immediately Finds a Receptive Audience Acts 16:11-15**

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

*And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled.*

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<sup>112</sup> F.J.A. Hort, *Prolegomena to Romans and Ephesians*, (London, Cambridge University Press) 1895 page 83

*And a certain woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.*

*And when she and her household had been immersed, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.*

Luke carefully notes the daily progress of the trip from Troas to Philippi. Obviously, the wind was favorable for the team's westward trip across the northern Aegean, because they finished the trip in two days. The reverse trip, from Philippi to Troas, recorded in Acts 20:6, took five days.

On the evening of the first day, they reached Samothrace, which is a mountainous island, with a peak rising 5000 feet above sea level. Samothrace was the seat of a very highly patronized mystery cult, the Cabiri. The Cabiri religion had been practiced on Samothrace as far back as the history of the region goes.

The team did not linger on Samothrace. The next day they traveled to Neapolis which was the seaport of Philippi. Philippi was ten miles inland from Neapolis.

See ADDENDUM N for the geographical location and journey traveled on this trip.

## EXCURSUS

### Philippi

Philippi was situated between the Strymon and Nestos rivers. It was located on the banks of a very deep and rapidly flowing stream, the Gangites. Philippi also had the distinction of being the eastern terminus of the great Egnatian Way (the *via Egnatia*), which was the Roman highway that linked the Adriatic Sea with the Aegean Sea.<sup>113</sup> It also was valued in antiquity for its nearby gold mines.

In 42 BC the city was the site of the battle in which Mark Antony and Octavian gained revenge on Julius Caesar's assassins, Brutus and Cassius. The battle involved the largest number of troops in Roman warfare up to that point. 19 legions of 110,000 men on the Triumvirate<sup>114</sup> side faced 17 Republican legions of 90,000 men, and the result was 40,000 casualties. This battle was a significant contribution to the end of the Roman Republic and the resulting Imperial Roman era.<sup>115</sup>

<sup>113</sup> <https://www.worldhistory.org/Philippi/>

<sup>114</sup> A *triumvirate* is a system of government wherein three people share the highest political power. The term originated in Rome during the final collapse of the republic; it literally means the rule of three men (*tres viri*). The members of a triumvirate may or may not be elected and may or may not rule in accordance with existing legal norms. <https://www.thoughtco.com/first-and-second-triumvirates-of-rome-117560>

<sup>115</sup> Imperial Rome describes the period of the Roman Empire (27 B.C.. to 476 A.D.) following Julius Caesar's assassination, which ultimately ended Rome's time as a republic. The first Roman emperor was Augustus Caesar, who came to power after the assassination of Julius Caesar, his great-uncle.

Roman generals sometimes established a Roman colony, in which Roman army veterans were given land grants when they retired. Philippi was one of these colonies, therefore, a significant portion of its population would have been retired army veterans.

A Roman colony used Roman law and each colony modeled its constitution after the municipal constitution of Rome.

Philippi's independence is seen in that it did not depend on Roman coinage, but taking advantage of the nearby gold mines, Philippi minted its own coins.

Today Philippi is a significant archaeological site. The site has substantial remains including a theatre and four basilicas. Philippi is listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site.

As seen in his previous journeys, when Paul visited a city it was his custom, on the first Sabbath after his arrival, to attend the local synagogue. The synagogue is where he always began his efforts to evangelize – i.e., *to the Jew first* (Romans 1:16; 2:9-10).

There were very few resident Jews in Philippi. The custom among the Jews was to establish a synagogue when there were ten adult Jewish men in residence. Even if there were scores of Jewish women in a city, there had to be ten adult men to make up the quorum required for a synagogue.

Even though there was not a Jewish synagogue in the city, there was a place on the banks of the Gangites where women, either of Jewish birth, or Gentile, went to pray on the Sabbath. It was a custom for Jews in regions away from synagogues to pray at riverbanks or by the seaside.<sup>116</sup> Paul and his companions found this place and sat down with the women and told them the story of Jesus.

Lydia, from Thyatira, is the only woman named in the encounter.

Lydia had come to Philippi as a businesswoman, selling purple dyed fabrics. She obviously was a prosperous woman, since she had a house big enough to have a *household*.. Also, the house was big enough to accommodate the evangelistic team.

Thyatira was in the ancient kingdom of Lydia. The people of that region were famous for their skill in the manufacture of purple dye, which they made from the juice of the madder root.<sup>117</sup> People of wealth sought garments made from purple-dyed fabrics. Royal robes were dyed purple.

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<sup>116</sup> Some “places of prayer” were built by the sea. Josephus records a decree issued by the sea-side city of Halicarnassus which includes this bit: “we have decreed, that as many men and women of the Jews as are willing so to do, may celebrate their Sabbaths, and perform their holy offices, according to Jewish laws; and may make their places of prayer at the sea-side, according to the customs (*ethos*) of their forefathers ...” *Antiquities of the Jews* 14.258 or 14.10.23. (It is interesting that this decree explicitly mentions women as well as men.)

<https://margmowczko.com/lydia-and-the-place-of-prayer-at-philippi/>

<sup>117</sup> For thousands of years, madder root juice was utilized as a textile dye. Fabrics dyed with madder root have been discovered in archeological sites dating back to ancient India and Egypt. It was used in the manufacture of expensive carpets until the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, at which time chemical dyes came into use.

The statement, *and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul*, implies that her heart was, in some way, closed. Why was it closed and how did the Lord open her heart?

Every Jew and Jewish proselyte, at that time, was wedded to the belief that the coming Messiah would establish an earthly kingdom. This belief was held to so strongly that their hearts were closed to any concept of a crucified Christ and his establishment of a spiritual kingdom. This belief is what caused the Jews to reject Christ while He was still on the earth and continued to be their stumbling block. Describing this situation, Paul wrote, *but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness.*<sup>118</sup>

The statement, *the Lord opened her heart*, means that He removed this mistaken concept which would have prevented her from receiving the Christ. As a result, she was able *to respond to the things spoken by Paul*. God did not pre-determine her response, but He removed the barrier that stood between her and the Gospel.

No information is given as to the constituency of her household. It may have included female slaves and freed-women, whom she employed and who made up her *familia*.

The view of some exegetes is that the women who were worshipping on the riverbank were the members of Lydia's household. This reasoning is based on the fact that her entire household was immersed, but there is no account of the presentation of the Gospel except to the women on the riverbank. There is no mention of the members of the household hearing the Gospel, later. Only the women at the riverbank are described as being the apostle's audience.

J.W. McGarvey wrote,

“...when Paul reached the riverbank, he *spoke to the women who were come together*, and when, in the second verse after this, the writer speaks of Lydia's household, he evidently means to identify those women as the household. It is entirely within the possibility, as Plumtre also suggests, that among those women were Euodia and Synthe, who subsequently labored with Paul in the gospel, and whose alienation from each other at a still later period became the subject of deep solicitude to the apostle (Philippians 4:2-3).”<sup>119</sup>

The term rendered as *prevailed upon us*, describing Lydia's urging the team to stay in her home, is *παραβιάζομαι* (*parabiazomai*). This term literally means, *to use force*. Figuratively it means, *to compel, to successfully persuade someone*. The use of this term indicates that there was some hesitation on the part of the evangelistic party to accept Lydia's hospitality. Because of the sexual immorality of the pagan/gentile world, the team may have been concerned about the appropriateness of a group of men's staying in a home full of women. The team did not want to give any opportunity for the Philippian community to assume sexual liaisons between the members of Lydia's household and the evangelists.

### EXCURSUS

Is the immersion of everyone in Lydia's household a valid argument for infant baptism?

<sup>118</sup>I Corinthians 1:23:

<sup>119</sup>J.W. McGarvey, *Acts of Apostles*, Part Third, Paul's Tours Among the Gentiles (Cincinnati, Standard Publishing Co.) 1892, page 95

Some pedobaptists argue that since everyone in Lydia's household was baptized, then children must have been baptized, since a household always includes children. This is a rather absurd argument. There is no information given as to who constituted her household. The probability is that the household consisted of Lydia and her female servants.

### **Saul and Silas Imprisoned Acts 16:16-24**

*And it happened that as we were going to the place of prayer, a certain slave-girl having a spirit of divination met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortunetelling.*

*Following after Paul and us, she kept crying out, saying, "These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation."*

*And she continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!"*

*And it came out at that very moment.*

*But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the authorities, and when they had brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, "These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews,<sup>21</sup> and are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans."*

*And the crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them, and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods.*

*And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely;*

*and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison, and fastened their feet in the stocks.*

The incident reported here is the first time that the apostles were persecuted by Gentiles. Prior to this event, all persecution had come from Jews.

Each day, as the evangelists went from Lydia's home to the place of prayer on the riverbank, a spirit-possessed slave girl, known as a fortune teller, followed them. She kept proclaiming their identity to be what they themselves would have claimed it to be.

The literal rendering of the Greek states that the slave-girl was possessed by a Python spirit (πνεῦμα πύθων - *pneuma puthohn*). Greeks believed that fortune telling/prophetic power came from being inspired by Apollo, the god of prophecy, whom they called, *Pythian Apollo*, because he supposedly killed the python snake that guarded the Delphic Oracle. Those who were possessed by this spirit also were known for ventriloquism, which greatly impressed the audiences.

Regardless of what the particular spirit may have possessed the girl, it was a demonic spirit. Note that the term used by this spirit, the *Most High God*, is the same terminology used by the legion of spirits at Gadara.

*And seeing Jesus from a distance, he ran up and bowed down before Him; and crying out with a loud voice, he said, "What do I have to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God, do not torment me!"*

*For He had been saying to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!"*

*And He was asking him, "What is your name?" And he said to Him, "My name is Legion; for we are many." (Mark 5:6-9)*

We must read between the lines to seek to discover the motive behind the demon's proclaiming the identity of the missionaries. It may have been to harass them, and in some manner make them so irritated that they would leave Philippi. It also may have been an effort to elicit their validation of her fortune telling ability and thus, enhance the reputation of the maiden. Fact is, the motive is not clear.

We also cannot fail to notice that Paul did not initially put an end to her behavior, but he tolerated it for several days. Why Paul waited several days before expelling the demon, is not recorded.<sup>120</sup>

When he did finally react, it was the result of a very human response, *Paul was greatly annoyed.*

Even though the maiden was proclaiming the truth to a people who had some confidence in her utterances, Paul could not allow the people to be convinced that there was some sort of alliance between the demon and the apostles.

Paul, finally, exercised the authority over demons that had been given to the apostles. *In Jesus' Name, means, in behalf of Jesus, I, as his representative, command you to come out of her!* Immediately, the demonic spirit came out of the woman.

With the departure of the spirit, the valuable asset that had brought the girl's owners *much profit by fortunetelling*, also departed. When the girl's owners discovered what had happened, they reacted immediately.

With a touch of humor, Luke used the same Greek verb, ἐξέρχομαι (*egserkomai*), *to go out*, for the departure of the demon and the departure of the owners' assets.

No information is given as to what became of the maid who was miraculously relieved of demon possession.

The girl's owners immediately reacted – Paul had touched their *hip-pocket nerve*.

The owners dragged Paul and Silas into the public square and presented them to rulers of a lower rank. These officials then referred them to the two chief rulers. The chief governing power of any Roman colony was vested in two duumvirs. They held court in the Philippian forum. It is before these two duumvirs that Paul and Silas were presented.

Note that the other members of the apostolic team, Timothy and Luke, were not targeted as objects of the slave owner's wrath. Obviously, Paul and Silas were the public face of the team.

The real cause of the slave owners' complaint was suppressed, and a false one was presented. Obviously, the slave owners were stirring up the Gentile rabble against these *Jews*. Throughout the centuries and in many countries, antisemitism has been the motive behind some of the most

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<sup>120</sup> McGarvey speculates, "Paul...delayed for many days the act which at last became unavoidable, because he knew that the money value of the slave would be greatly reduced by expulsion of the demon, and he dreaded the consequences of appearing in this heathen city wo interfere with the rights of property." McGarvey page 97

evil actions taken against the descendants of Israel.<sup>121</sup> That prejudice clearly was used by the girl's owners.

On this present missionary tour, Paul reached Corinth. Luke informs us that at that time all Jews had been expelled from Rome by the emperor (Acts 18:2). It is possible that this had already taken place, when the apostolic team was in Philippi.

The hypocritical outcry of the slave owners – *these men are Jews....we are Romans*, had the effect that they desired. Not only was the crowd stirred up to violence, but the magistrates also immediately reacted by tearing the clothes off of the Paul and Silas and giving the order to beat them with rods. They were saying, *We'll show these filthy Jews what happens when they try to change us Romans into despicable Jews.*

Then, wounded and bleeding, they were cast into the deepest part of prison. The jailor, taking seriously the injunction to guard them securely, fastened their legs in stocks. These stocks had more than just two holes (one for each leg), but a variety of holes, so that the prisoner could be secured in the most uncomfortable position. While in the stocks, the prisoner could neither sit up nor lie down without leg cramps and pain.

#### **A Midnight Earthquake and the Conversion of the Jailer Acts 16:25-34**

*But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them;*

*and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's chains were unfastened.*

*And when the jailer had been roused out of sleep and had seen the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped.*

*But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here!"*

*And he called for lights and rushed in and, trembling with fear, he fell down before Paul and Silas, and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"*

*And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household."*

*And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house.*

*And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was immersed, he and all his household.*

*And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.*

Near midnight, the prisoners in the jail heard sounds coming from the inmost cell. However, instead of groaning and cursing, which is the sort of sounds that they expected, they heard the occupants of that cell praying and singing hymns of praise to God.

Tertullian<sup>122</sup> wrote, *the legs do not feel the chains, when the mind is in heaven.*<sup>123</sup>

Suddenly, a midnight earthquake not only opened the doors of the prison and caused all of the fetters that bound the prisoners to fall off, but it also awakened the sleeping jailor.

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<sup>121</sup>Luke later informs us that at time, all of the Jews had been expelled from Rome.

<sup>122</sup> 60 AD – 230 AD

<sup>123</sup> Tertullian, *AD MARTYRAS*, Chapter 2 <https://ccel.org/ccel/terullian/martyras/anf03>

The Roman penalty imposed on a soldier or Roman official, when a prisoner under his charge escaped, was for the penalty planned for the prisoner, to be imposed on the official who lost the prisoner.

When the awakened jailor rushed to the prison and saw that all of the doors were opened, he did not go into the prison. He halted at the gate and assumed that all of the prisoners had taken flight. Therefore, the most honorable thing he could do was to commit suicide.

As he stood by the prison door, ready to thrust his sword into his throat or his heart, totally out of sight of the conditions in the prison, a voice from the prison halted him, *Do yourself no harm, for we are all here!*

We have to wonder how Paul, being in the innermost portion of the prison, could know what the jailor was about to do. There must have been some Holy Spirit communication to Paul, informing him of what was about to happen and how he should respond to this information.

There is no report in the account of the apostolic team's preaching the Gospel other than to the women on the riverbank. However, they must have done so, because the spirit controlling the slave girl cried out, *"These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation."*

When this proclamation of the way of salvation took place, we do not know, but it must have been public enough for the jailor to have been aware of what the apostles had been proclaiming. Otherwise, why would he have asked, *Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*

Paul's immediate response was the basic requirement for salvation, *Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household.*

Of Lydia, Luke commented, *the Lord opened her heart.* Obviously, the Holy Spirit had chosen to open the heart of the jailor, enabling him to respond to the Gospel. The means of opening the jailor's heart was an amazing miracle.

Immediately, the jailor took the two apostles into his home, where they presented the Gospel to the jailor's household. Note that they did this before the jailor washed their festering wounds that had been caused by their being beaten with rods. Presenting the Gospel was of first importance.

Then, the jailor and everyone in his household was immersed. We are not told who or how many constituted that household, but we assume all were of sufficient age to make a decision to accept the Gospel and to be immersed into Christ.<sup>124</sup> After the household had heard the Gospel, accepted it, and been immersed, there was joy in the house. They had a celebratory meal, *and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.*

### **The Apostolic Team Leaves Philippi Acts 16:35-40**

*Now when day came, the chief magistrates sent their policemen, saying, "Release those men." And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, "The chief magistrates have sent to release you. Now therefore, come out and go in peace."*

*But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us in public without trial, men who are Romans, and have thrown us into prison; and now are they sending us away secretly? No indeed! But let them come themselves and bring us out."*

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<sup>124</sup> Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27



*And the policemen reported these words to the chief magistrates. And they were afraid when they heard that they were Romans, and they came and appealed to them, and when they had brought them out, they kept begging them to leave the city.*

*And they went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia, and when they saw the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.*

What an amazing turnaround of circumstances.

The chief magistrates had the attitude, “We’ve taught these vagabond Jews a lesson and after what they experienced in Philippi, they never will come back.”

Then, suddenly, the chief magistrates were stricken with fear, when they heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens and that their rights had been violated. The charges against them should have been properly investigated, but instead, they had been beaten and whipped without any inquiry as to the legitimacy of the charges.

By a series of Valerian and Porcian laws enacted before the beginning of the Roman Republic, Roman citizens were exempted from degrading forms of punishment and had certain special rights given to them by law.<sup>125</sup> These privileges of Roman Citizenship were reaffirmed under the laws of the Roman Empire, by a Julian Law, dealing with public disorder.<sup>126</sup>

Why didn’t Paul appeal to his Roman citizenship the day before. Perhaps he did, but that it was just was ignored. According to law, all that a Roman citizen had to do was declare, *ciuis Romanus sum*, (I am a Roman Citizen), and should there be any doubt, an effort should be made to investigate the claim.

When the policemen brought the report to the magistrates that in yesterday’s excitement they had failed to ascertain that these two Jews were Roman citizens, whose citizenship was as good as the magistrates, the magistrates were deflated. If word of their actions reached the ears of the authorities in Rome, they would be in a very awkward position.

They quickly apologized to Paul and Silas. After escorting them out of the prison, they asked them to be good enough to not remain any longer in Philippi.

Before leaving Philippi, Paul and Silas visited Lydia’s house and spoke words of encouragement to all who were there. Paul, Silas, and Timothy then departed westward, along the Egnatian Way, toward Thessalonica. (see ADDENDUM N for a geographical perspective on this trip)

It seems that Luke remained behind in Philippi. The **we** pronoun is not used in the description of the team’s departure - *when they saw the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.*

The next **we** section of Acts, indicating Luke’s involvement, begins in 20:5-6. Perhaps Luke is the true comrade whom Paul asks, in his letter to the Philippians, to help Euodia and Syntyche to live in harmony.

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<sup>125</sup> M. Tullius Cicero, *On Behalf of Rabirius, charged with Treason*, Chapter 2, referring to the enactment of 195 B.C., stated, “The Porcian Law removed the rods from the bodies of all Roman citizens.”

<sup>126</sup> *The le lulia de ui publica* A.H.M. Jones, *Studies in Roman Government and Law*, (Oxford University Press) 1960, pages 97-98

*I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord. Indeed, true comrade, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.* (Philippians 4:2-3)

Paul and the Church at Philippi had a very special relationship that continued throughout his lifetime. The Letter to the Philippians, written years later, makes clear that the same hospitality and concern that he received when in Philippi, continued through Paul's subsequent trips and his later imprisonment (Philippians 4:10-16).

### **The Team Arrives in Thessalonica Acts 17:1-9**

*Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.*

*And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ."*

*And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a great multitude of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women.*

*But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the marketplace, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and coming upon the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people.*

*And when they did not find them, they began dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have upset the world have come here also; and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus."*

*And they stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things. And when they had received a pledge from Jason and the others, they released them.*

See ADDENDUM N for the geographical location and journey traveled on this trip.

From Philippi, Paul, Silas, and Timothy took the Egnatian Way westward through Amphipolis, on the Strymon River and then, on a second day's journey they passed through Apollonia, and arrived Thessalonica (then, as now, the chief city of Macedonia).<sup>127</sup> The journey from Philippi to Thessalonica was a distance of 62 miles.

As has been seen, Paul's regular practice upon entering a city was to locate the synagogue and attend the synagogue on the first Sabbath after arriving in the city. When he showed up at the synagogue, Paul probably was invited to address the congregation, as had been done in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:13-16).

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<sup>127</sup> The municipality of Thessaloniki (contemporary name), the historical center, had a population of 317,778 in 2021. The Thessaloniki metropolitan area had 1,091,424 inhabitants in 2021. It is Greece's second major economic, industrial, commercial and political center, and a major transportation hub for Greece and southeastern Europe, notably through the Port of Thessaloniki. The city is renowned for its festivals, events and vibrant cultural life in general, and is considered to be Greece's cultural capital. Events such as the Thessaloniki International Fair and the Thessaloniki International Film Festival are held annually, while the city also hosts the largest bi-annual meeting of the Greek diaspora. Thessaloniki was the 2014 European Youth Capital

For three consecutive Sabbaths, Paul spoke in the synagogue and presented Old Testament Scriptures, along with the fulfillment of these that had been accomplished through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

As happened in the synagogues of south Galatia, on the first missionary journey, some Jewish listeners were convinced, but most of the converts were God-fearing Gentiles.

Special mention is made of a significant number of leading women. The Macedonian women had a well-earned reputation for their independence and enterprising spirit.<sup>128</sup>

Jason, who obviously was the missionaries' host, probably was one of the Jews who believed. The Greek name, *Jason*, was the Greek name assumed by many Jews who were originally named, *Joshua*.

It also is probable that Aristarchus and Secundus, who in 20:4, are described as Thessalonians, were among the Jews converted to Christian faith at this time.

As was reported in earlier situations, Jews who did not believe became incensed by the readiness of so many potential proselytes to embrace the Gospel.

So, being opportunists, they stirred the rabble that loafed in the marketplace, always looking for something to do.

By the time the mob assaulted the house where the missionaries had been staying, Paul, Silas, and Timothy, had made their escape. Probably some of the converts, getting wind of what was about to happen warned the team, enabling them to escape.

When the Jews and their mob could not haul them before the magistrate as they had intended, they had to content themselves with dragging Jason and some of the new converts before the magistrates. They lodged a very serious charge against them. They accused them of harboring Jewish *messianists*. Jewish political messianists had stirred up trouble in Rome and Alexandria, news of which had spread throughout the empire.

The mob charged that the missionaries not only had acted contrary of the decrees from Rome, but that they had proclaimed Jesus as a rival to the emperor who ruled in Rome.

When hearing these charges, the magistrates were appropriately concerned, and so they exacted a pledge from Jason and the others to see that there was no more trouble.

### **The Team arrives in Berea Acts 17:10-15**

*And the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea; and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.*

*Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so.*

*Many of them therefore believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men.*

*But when the Jews of Thessalonica found out that the word of God had been proclaimed by Paul in Berea also, they came there likewise, agitating and stirring up the crowds.*

*And then immediately the brethren sent Paul out to go as far as the sea; and Silas and Timothy remained there.*

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<sup>128</sup> W.W. Tarn and G.T. Griffith, *Hellenistic Civilisation* (London, Hodder & Staughton) 1952 pages 98-99

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

They had to leave the Egnatian Way and take the road south into the province of Achaia. Cicero described Berea as, "An out of the way town,"<sup>129</sup> meaning that it was off the main road, the Egnatian Way. Berea was about 40 miles west-southwest of Thessalonica.

Refer to ADDENDUM N to chart the geographical journey from Thessalonica to Berea.

The fact that the missionaries were still in Thessalonica and had to be sent away under the cover of darkness, indicates that some of the believers had hidden them from the Jews and their violent mob.

As we would expect, when they arrived in Berea, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.

The reception at Berea was different from that of Thessalonica. The congregation not only listened, but they were free of the prejudice displayed by Thessalonian Jews. They tested the words of the apostolic message by whether or not they lined up with Holy Scripture.

Because of this absence of prejudice, not only many Jews, but also a number of Greek men and women who were of the prominent families of the city became believers.

Among the Berean converts was Sopater, son of Pyrrhus (Acts 20:4 and possibly identical with the Sosipator of Romans 16:21).

As had happened earlier, when the Jews of Pisidian Antioch and Iconium had followed the apostolic team to Lystra and stirred up trouble, so Jews of Thessalonica, hearing about what was happening in Berea, they sent a delegation to stir up opposition in Berea/

Since Paul had been the public figure of the team, he especially was in danger. Because of this, some of the Bereans put Paul on a ship and accompanied him to Athens.

Silas and Timothy stayed behind, but when Paul and his companions arrived in Athens, he told the Bereans that when they returned home, they should tell Silas and Timothy to get to Athens as soon as possible.

### **Paul's First Days in Athens Acts 17:16-21**

*Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he was beholding the city full of idols.*

*So he was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and in the market place every day with those who happened to be present.*

*And also some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him. And some were saying, "What would this idle babbler wish to say?" Others, "He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities,"-- because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.*

*And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is which you are proclaiming? For you are bringing some strange things to our ears; we want to know therefore what these things mean."*

*(Now all the Athenians and the strangers visiting there used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new.)*

Even though Athens had lost its political prominence which had been hers in classical antiquity, she continued to represent the highest level of culture attained in classical antiquity. In the fields of architecture, oratory, and philosophy, Athens remained in unchallenged prestige. In

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<sup>129</sup> <https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Cic.Pis.36.89>

view of Athens storied past, Rome gave Athens the right to maintain her own institutions as a free and allied city within the Roman Empire. Paul had arrived in a very appropriate location to proclaim the Gospel to leading intellectuals.

As Paul walked among the outstanding architectural monuments of the city, many dedicated to various false gods, he became deeply disturbed.

As a result, not only in the Athenian synagogue, but Paul also spoke in the Athenian marketplace (the *agora* -ἀγορά). The Agora was the center of Athenian life and activity. It lay just north of the Acropolis. Orators, displaying their talent, regularly spoke in the Agora..

Two rival philosophies, vying for dominance in Athens, were the Stoics and the Epicureans.

- The Stoics (founded by Cypriot Zeno) regularly met in the *painted colonnade*, section of the Agora. They were essentially pantheistic, God being regarded as the world-soul. They believed in a *cosmopolis*, in which all truly free souls had equal citizen rights. They sought to break down all national and class distinctions. They had a great sense of moral righteousness and viewed suicide as an honorable means of escape from a life that could no longer be lived with dignity. A proud spirit of independence marked their philosophy.
- The Epicurean philosophy (founded by Epicurus), based its ethical theory on the atomic physics of Democritus<sup>130</sup> and considered pleasure to be the chief goal of life. They sought to enjoy a life of tranquility, free from pain, disturbing emotions, and superstitious fears (including the fear of death). Although they believed in the existence of gods, they argued that the gods had no interest in the life of men and women.

When Paul began to proclaim Jesus and the resurrection, the philosophers realized that this was a philosophy that they never had heard before. They needed to hear more.

The Court of the Areopagus (the hill of acres) got its name from the name of its customary meeting place, the hill southwest of the Acropolis. However, at the time of Paul's visit, the Areopagus was meeting in the Royal Colonnade in the northwest corner of the Agora.<sup>131</sup> The Court of the Areopagus exercised authority in matters of religion and morals and licensed public lecturers.

Paul was brought before this court, not to receive a license as a public lecturer, but to give him an opportunity to expound his teaching before experts. The Athenians were somewhat preoccupied with wanting to hear some new philosophy and toying with its argument. It was almost a game.

### **Paul's Speech before the Areopagus Acts 17:22-31**

*And Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects.*

*For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.' What therefore you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.*

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<sup>130</sup> Democritus (460-370 BC), taught what became known as the *atomic philosophy*. This philosophy argues that the entire creation is made up of tiny uncuttable building blocks, called, *atoms*.

<sup>131</sup> C. J. Hemer, "Paul at Athens: a Topographical Note (New Testament Studies, #20 <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Paul-at-Athens>) 1973-74, pages 341-350

*The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; neither is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all life and breath and all things; and He made from one, every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times, and the boundaries of their habitation, that they should seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His offspring.'*

*Being then the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man.*

*Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."*

Paul knew the wisdom of adapting his tone and general approach to the particular audience he was addressing.

- The address in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:16-41) is an example of Paul's preaching in a synagogue.
- This address, at the Areopagus is an example of preaching to pagans. He does not quote any of the Hebrew Scriptures, but he takes a different tack. .

Paul addresses this audience with quotations from Greek poets. Even so, his argument is based solely on biblical revelation, at times even using the very language of the Old Testament, although not identifying it as such.

He honors the Athenians for their being very religious. An example of their religiosity is the altar, *TO AN UNKNOWN GOD*. The God whom they venerated, but confessed their ignorance of His identity, was the God whom Paul proposed he make known to them.

As stated above, Paul's speech is very consistent with the Hebrew Scriptures. If the Temple at Jerusalem, which was erected for the worship of the only true God, could not contain Yahweh,<sup>132</sup> then how could the splendid shrines of Athens do so.

Furthermore, this God does not need anything from us. As Psalm 50:9-12 declares,

*I shall take no young bull out of your house,  
Nor male goats out of your folds.  
For every beast of the forest is Mine, The cattle on a thousand hills.  
I know every bird of the mountains,  
And everything that moves in the field is Mine.  
If I were hungry, I would not tell you;  
For the world is Mine, and all it contains.*

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<sup>132</sup> I Kings 8:27, Isaiah 66:1-2 etc.

The God who created everything in a general sense, is, in particular, the creator of the human race and gave to the human race, the entire globe as a dwelling place. In doing so, he allotted living space to each of the nations.<sup>133</sup>

Paul declared that the purpose of God's arrangement of time and place for the nations was so that they might seek God and find him.<sup>134</sup>

As Paul stated in Romans 1:20,

*For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.*

Paul then cited Greek poets who had declared that humans are the offspring of God, and that should impact how humans view Him. They should not view Him as being reducible to some image that can be made by human hands.

Paul then declared something that did not exist in Athenian thought – that God had set a day of judgment and had appointed the being who would be the judge. The time of ignorance was over, and the time of accountability had arrived. Evidence of the identity of the one whom God had appointed to judge the world (Jesus) was given through raising Him from the dead.

#### **The Athenian's Response to Paul's address Acts 17:32-34**

*Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some began to sneer, but others said, "We shall hear you again concerning this."*

*So Paul went out of their midst.*

*But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.*

As might be expected, the reaction/response to Paul's address was varied. Some sneered, but some indicated that they needed time to think and explore this matter further, perhaps even hoping that it might be true.

Some did respond positively, and accepted the truth of what Paul had declared. Although literature is filled with speculations and declarations about the identities of Dionysius and Damaris, we must admit that we know nothing further about them. Even so, there were some who believed the message and followed Paul when he left the Aeropagus.

Shortly thereafter, Paul left Athens. There is no mention of planting a church at Athens, nor any record of immersions.

Later, a church was established at Athens and modern Athenians made up for their ancestor's indifference by erecting a bronze tablet at the foot of the ascent to the Areopagus, on which they engraved Paul's speech, which they copied from Acts. They also named a nearby thoroughfare in his honor.

#### **Paul's Arrival in Corinth Acts 18:1-4**

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<sup>133</sup> This is consistent with Deuteronomy 32:8 *When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, When He separated the sons of man, He set the boundaries of the peoples According to the number of the sons of Israel.*

<sup>134</sup> The Greek verb rendered *grope for Him*, is ψηλαφάω (*psaylafaoh*), which is the image of groping in darkness or semi-darkness when the light of God's full revelation is not available.

*After these things he left Athens and went to Corinth.*

*And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome.*

*He came to them, and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working; for by trade they were tent-makers.*

*And he was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.*

Leaving Athens, Paul went to Corinth. Corinth is on the southern end of the land-bridge that connects central and northern Greece with the area known as the Peloponnese.<sup>135</sup>

See ADDENDUM N for the geographical route taken by Paul.

All rabbinical students routinely apprenticed at some sort of a trade or craft. As a student under Gamaliel, Paul had apprenticed as a tent maker. At various times during his missionary career Paul supported himself by working at this trade.<sup>136</sup> Therefore, it is not unusual that shortly after his arrival at Corinth that he encountered a couple whose trade was tentmaking.

Aquila and Priscilla were Jews who had been living in Rome, but along with all Roman Jews, were expelled from Rome by Claudius. Given the description of Paul's relationship with them we assume that they were Christians before they left Rome. Some speculate that they may have been the founders of the Roman Church.<sup>137</sup>

When Paul mentions the wife in his letters, he uses her formal name, *Prisca*, whereas Luke, following his practice of using the language of conversation, uses her more familiar name, *Priscilla*.<sup>138</sup>

Corinth had a large Jewish population, thus allowing Paul to follow his custom of proclaiming the Gospel message in the synagogue. Here, Sabbath after Sabbath, while waiting for Silas and Timothy, he presented to the congregation, the manner in which Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah.

### **Silas and Timothy Arrive; An Eighteen-Month Ministry in Corinth Acts 18:5-11**

*But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul began devoting himself completely to the word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.*

*And when they resisted and blasphemed, he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood be upon your own heads! I am clean. From now on I shall go to the Gentiles."*

*And he departed from there and went to the house of a certain man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God, whose house was next to the synagogue.*

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<sup>135</sup> The Peloponnese is a large peninsula linked to the northern territory of Greece by the Isthmus of Corinth. To the west of the Peloponnese is the Ionian sea while to the east is the Aegean Sea. The terrain is typified by high limestone mountains, narrow coastal plains, and natural rocky harbors. The area contained several cities important in antiquity such as Mycenae, Argos, Megalopolis, Sparta, Elis, Messene, and Corinth. The region also contains the important ancient religious sites of Olympia, Epidaurus, Isthmia, and Nemea which regularly hosted Pan-Hellenic sporting games, notably the Olympic Games.

<sup>136</sup> Acts 20:34; I Corinthians 9:3-18; II Corinthians 11:7; I Thessalonians 2:9; II Thessalonians 3:8

<sup>137</sup> Bruce, page 347

<sup>138</sup> Rom. 16:3; I Co. 16:19; II Tim. 4:19



*And Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being immersed.*

*And the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city."*

*And he settled there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.*

When Silas and Timothy arrived from Berea, they brought encouraging news from Macedonia – that the converts in Thessalonica, even though they were persecuted, were remaining steadfast.<sup>139</sup>

At the same time that Silas and Timothy arrived, *Epaphroditus* arrived with a gift of money from the Philippians. This gift enabled Paul to leave the trade of tent making and devote himself fully to the proclamation of the Gospel.<sup>140</sup>

This caused the usual response among the Jews – opposition reared its ugly head and Paul did a very dramatic thing- he shook out his cloak so that not a speck of dust from the synagogue would remain on his clothing.

- He would have nothing further to do with that building and the blasphemous response to the Gospel message that had occurred in the building..
- He had discharged his responsibility to them. He was free of any blame if they all went to hell.

Fortunately, there was a house next to the synagogue, owned by a God-fearing Gentile, Titus Justus. This man had listened to Paul's message and had been persuaded as to the truth of his words. The home of Titus Justus became Paul's new evangelistic center.

A surprising convert was the ruler of the synagogue, Crispus, who, in spite of the reaction of most of the congregation, had opened his heart to the Gospel. He and his family would have departed from the synagogue and joined the new Christian community based in the home of Titus Justus.

In I Corinthians 1:14, Paul stated that the only person whom he personally immersed into Christ at Corinth, was this Crispus. Many others were immersed into Christ, but all of the other converts would have been immersed by members of the team, Silas and Timothy.

Go to ADDENDUM D and mark the boxes appropriate for this episode

A message from God came to Paul in a night vision. The Lord told Paul that he should not be afraid but to boldly continue to proclaim the Gospel. As a result, Paul continued on in Corinth for eighteen months.

### **Paul before Gallio Acts 18:12-17**

*But while Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him before the judgment seat, saying, "This man persuades men to worship God contrary to the law."*

*But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, "If it were a matter of wrong or of vicious crime, O Jews, it would be reasonable for me to put up with you; but if there*

<sup>139</sup> I Thessalonians 3:6-10

<sup>140</sup> II Corinthians 11:9; Philippians 4:15-19

*are questions about words and names and your own law, look after it yourselves; I am unwilling to be a judge of these matters."*

*And he drove them away from the judgment seat.*

*And they all took hold of Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue, and began beating him in front of the judgment seat. And Gallio was not concerned about any of these things.*

Even though Paul had been assured in the night vision that no harm would come to him, the vision did not guarantee that no attack would be launched against him.

This time, instead of stirring up the local rabble against Paul, the Jewish authorities took him before the civic authority of the area, the proconsul, Gallio.

Gallio showed a degree of disgust with the Jewish authorities' attempts to put Rome on their side (as is seen in the language, *put up with you*). He told them that since the charges had nothing to do with Roman law, they had to deal with the problem themselves.

Sosthenes had succeeded Crispus as ruler of the synagogue. As the head of the local Jewish community, he probably was the one who brought to Gallio the charges against Paul. In a demonstration of anti-Jewish sentiment, the locals, who were witnessing the court proceedings, grabbed Sosthenes and began beating him. Gallio witnessed the actions of the violent Gentile mob and did not interfere.

### **A Brief Visit to Ephesus Acts 18:18-21**

*And Paul, having remained many days longer, took leave of the brethren and put out to sea for Syria, and with him were Priscilla and Aquila.*

*In Cenchrea he had his hair cut, for he was keeping a vow.*

*And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there.*

*Now he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews.*

*And when they asked him to stay for a longer time, he did not consent, but taking leave of them and saying, "I will return to you again if God wills," he set sail from Ephesus.*

See ADDENDUM N for the geographical details of this lengthy trip.

Gallio's decision was so favorable for Paul, that he stayed in Corinth for an extended time.

.He finally left Corinth, desiring to visit Syria and Judea. For undisclosed reasons, Priscilla and Aquilla accompanied him.

At some point, Paul had made a private vow. We do not know when it was done nor the purpose of the vow. As was common with the Jews, a sign of being under a vow was allowing the hair to grow long. This would not have been a formal Nazarite vow, because a Nazarite vow could not be undertaken outside of the Holy Land.<sup>141</sup>

We are not told when Paul made the vow nor why. Perhaps he made it when the promise was given that no harm would come to him in Corinth (Acts 18:10). The message of the vision was confirmed when, in spite of extreme threats, Paul had not experienced any harm while

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<sup>141</sup> If a Nazarite vow were made in a country outside of the Holy Land, its fulfillment required the vow-maker to live at least thirty days in Judea, and at the end of the time, the hair would be shorn and offered in the temple (Numbers 6:2ff). There was no allowance for ending the vow and shaving the head outside of Jerusalem.

ministering in Corinth. The making and the fulfillment of such a vow could have been undertaken as an act of thanksgiving and when Paul left Corinth, the vow had been completed.

Paul, Priscilla, and Aquilla walked seven miles, southeast, to Cenchrea, which was the seaport of Corinth. The ship that they boarded at Cenchrea took them to Ephesus.

Ephesus was the greatest commercial city of Asia Minor, north of the Tarsus Mountain Range. It was on the main road from Rome to the east and was the seat of administrative province of Asia. It was a free Greek city, with its own senate and civic assembly. Ephesus prided itself on being the *Temple Warden of Artemus* (which played a major role in the episode reported in Acts 19).

Priscilla and Aquilla settled down in Ephesus for several years. They probably reestablished their tent-making business in Ephesus and became a part of the community.

There was a large settlement of Jews at Ephesus. The Ephesian Jews had an impressive synagogue. As was his custom, Paul showed up at the synagogue and began presenting the message of Christ. For some undisclosed reason, Paul only had time for an introductory discourse with the Jews. The text is not clear as to why Paul was in such a hurry to get on with the journey.<sup>142</sup> The congregation neither accepted nor rejected his message and they wanted to hear more, but Paul said that he had to travel on and, if God willed, he would return.

### **Paul's Brief Visit to Judea and Syria Acts 18:22-23**

*And when he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, and went down to Antioch.*

*And having spent some time there, he departed and passed successively through the Galatian region and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.*

Some exegetes contend that the expression, *went up and greeted the church*, describes a hurried trip to Jerusalem to visit the Mother Church<sup>143</sup> (this view is reflected in the map at ADDENDUM N). That is pure speculation.

Taken in context, *And when he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church*, would refer to greeting the Church at Caesarea, which was birthed when Peter preached at the home of Cornelius (Acts 10:1-11:16).

Paul's stay at Caesarea was brief, because he was aiming toward Syrian Antioch. Antioch was the church which had released Barnabas and Saul (Paul) to go out on the first missionary journey (Acts 13:1-3), and the church from which he and Silas had launched the second missionary journey (Acts 15:30-41).

He remained in Antioch for an unspecified length of time. No doubt he spent his time there, encouraging the brethren by reporting all of the evangelistic successes that had taken place. Not only evangelistic success among Jews, but especially the evangelistic success among the Gentiles. My, what stories he could recite to the assembled brethren at Antioch!

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<sup>142</sup> The KJV includes in verse 21 the interpolated clause, found only in the Western Text (a Fourth Century text), *I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem*. None of the other manuscript families contain this clause. If it were in the original, there is would be no reason for the transcribers to omit it. This clearly is an addition to the text, seeking to explain Paul's haste.

<sup>143</sup> Bruce, pages 356-357

After an extended time, Paul left Antioch and launched out on his third missionary journey. His eye was on Ephesus, where he had seen keen interest in his Gospel presentation. Along the way, he visited the churches in the southern Galatian region.

### **Apollos Arrives in Ephesus Acts 18:24-28**

*Now a certain Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures.*

*This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the immersion of John; and he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue.*

*But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.*

*And when he wanted to go across to Achaia, the brethren encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him; and when he had arrived, he helped greatly those who had believed through grace;*

*for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.*

After Paul's hasty departure from Ephesus, another very interesting visitor, Apollos, arrived in the city. Luke made a point to inform his readers that Apollos was from Alexandria. From very ancient times, Alexandria was known for its being a center of scholarly pursuits. The world-renown, Alexandrian Library was the height of scholarship in the ancient world. Oratory and rhetoric, equal to that practiced in Athens, were important in Alexandria.

Alexandria also had a very large and influential Jewish population. For at least two centuries, Alexandria had been the place where Hebrew and Greek literature were interspersed. Alexandria also was recognized as the chief seat of Hebrew learning. This included not only a knowledge of both the Hebrew and Greek versions of the Old Testament, but also a knowledge of the other Greek writings of Hebrew scholars.

Ptolemy Philadelphus II (285-246 BC) sought to have in his world-famous library, a copy of every scholarly piece of literature that existed in the Mediterranean world. One example of his efforts to attain this was his determination to have the Jewish Scriptures in his library. However, he wanted them in the Greek language, not in Hebrew. This resulted in the translation of the Jewish Scriptures into the Greek language. This version came to be known as, *the Septuagint*, because of the tradition that seventy-two Hebrew scribes produced the translation in seventy-two days. The Septuagint was the version of the Hebrew Scriptures read by many Jews in the First Century. Some of the Old Testament quotes in the New Testament seem to be from the Septuagint, rather than from the Hebrew version.

With that sort of background, it is not surprising that Apollos was such an effective messenger for the message of Christ.

The statement that *he was mighty in the Scriptures*, means that he knew the Old Testament well and that he knew how to handle them in argument and exposition. In that period, the only source of the Scriptures was on manuscripts. Therefore, it was no ordinary accomplishment to be so familiar with the Scriptures.

There are many unanswered questions concerning Apollos that we have to admit we cannot answer in a definitive manner.

For example, no information is given as to where or by whom Apollos *had been instructed in the way of the Lord*. He must have received this instruction prior to Pentecost, and he knew only the Pre-Pentecostal immersion of John.

John's immersion was an immersion unto repentance and was anticipatory of that which would be imparted by the Christ.<sup>144</sup>

John did not immerse into any name, but Christian immersion is *into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit for the forgiveness of sins* (Acts 2:38a)

Also, immersion is not just an external rite, but there is spiritual impartation in Christian immersion. John's immersion had no promise of the Holy Spirit attached to it, but this is one of the important results of Christian immersion, *repent and be immersed everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit* (Acts 2:38).

Priscilla and Aquilla, hearing him in the synagogue, quickly saw the deficiency in his message and privately, *explained to him the way of God more accurately*.

Note that Priscilla took part with Aquilla in instructing Apollos. Because her name is mentioned first, some speculate that she was the more vocal of the two.

To Apollos credit, as a sincere seeker after truth, he appears to have gladly accepted the correction.

There is no mention of Apollos' being re-immersed. Later, when Paul encountered some disciples in the same condition as Apollos, he immersed them in Christian immersion. Why didn't Aquilla immerse Apollos? If he did immerse Apollos, Luke, for some reason, Luke did not record it. Surely, if he were immersed in Christian immersion, Luke would have recorded it. Perhaps Aquilla had not encountered such a situation before and he did not know what he should do, therefore he did not immerse Apollos.

Some commentaries scarcely touch the question as to whether or not Apollos was immersed according to the Pentecostal pattern.<sup>145</sup>

Some commentaries take the position that he was not immersed according to the Pentecostal pattern, but they make little comment on the issue.<sup>146</sup>

J. W. McGarvey goes to some extent to present the proposition that those who received John's immersion before Pentecost were not subsequently, immersed in Christian immersion.

### **Here is a summary of McGarvey's presentation**

A possible answer is that those who were immersed in John's immersion, prior to Pentecost, were not required to be re-immersed. This seems to be implied in the Acts 2 report of Pentecost.

Prior to Pentecost, both Jesus and His disciples immersed in John's immersion. Here is the sequence that demonstrates this.

<sup>144</sup> Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:4,7-8; Luke 3:16; John 1:26,27; Acts 13:24

<sup>145</sup> David Williams, *Acts, The New International Biblical Commentary* (Peabody, Mass. Hendrickson Publishers) 1990, pages 324-325.

<sup>146</sup> F . F. Bruce, pages 359-360

- *Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him. But John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?" But Jesus answering said to him, "Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he permitted Him. (Matthew 3:13-15)*
- *After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He was spending time with them and baptizing. And John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there; and they were coming and were being baptized. (John 3:22-23)*
- *When therefore the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John (although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were), (John 4:1-2)*

Some, if not all of the 120 who constituted the Church, prior to Pentecost (Acts 1:15), had been immersed in John's immersion.

Yet, even though the 120 who constituted the Pre-Pentecostal Church had only been immersed in John's immersion, there is no evidence that any of these were re-immersed after Peter's instruction to the Pentecostal audience, *"Repent, and let each of you be immersed in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38)*

Furthermore, the 120, who constituted the pre-Pentecostal Church, were the Church after Pentecost, to whom were added 3000 new converts. *So then, those who had received his word were immersed; and there were added that day about three thousand souls. (Acts 2:41)*

For that matter, none of the original twelve apostles were immersed in Christian immersion after the Pentecostal pattern.

This leads us to conclude that those who were immersed in John's immersion, prior to Pentecost, possibly were not re-immersed. However, those who were immersed in John's immersion, after the Pentecostal promise, were immersed in Christian immersion.<sup>147</sup>

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McGarvey's view is only speculation and possibility, based on the limited information given in the text.

For reasons not explained in the text, Apollos decided to leave Ephesus and visit the churches planted by Paul in Achaia. The Ephesian brethren encouraged him in this and gave him letters of recommendation to be presented to the brothers in those churches.

This is the first time that there is a record of a letter of commendation being given to disciples going from one community to another. However, later, that became a common practice (II Corinthians 3:1-2). The Ephesian brethren encouraged him to go because they were aware of his amazing ability to persuade through the use of the Jewish Scriptures. They knew that the brethren in Achaia needed such a spokesman in their controversies with the Jews. He was just the man to reach the Jews and strengthen the faith of the believers.

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<sup>147</sup> J. W. McGarvey, pages 148, 152-153

Although Paul had converts in Corinth, and planted a church, he was not greatly successful with the Jews in that city (Acts 18:6, 12ff), Apollos had great success. Paul acknowledged Apollos' vital role in his First Letter to the Corinthians.

*I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth.*

*Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor.*

*For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. (I Corinthians 3:6-9)*

Later, when there were divisions in the Corinthian Church, two of the developing groups claimed Apollos on the one hand and Paul on the other hand, as being the head of their respective parties.

*Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ." (1 Corinthians 1:12).*

To be put in the same category as Paul and Cephas (Peter) indicates what an impressive person Apollos must have been.

There is no hint that Apollos encouraged this tendency. As noted earlier, Paul recognized and commended Apollos for building upon the foundation that Paul had laid.

### **Paul and the Twelve Disciples at Ephesus Acts 19:1-7**

*And it came about that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper country came to Ephesus, and found some disciples, and he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said to him, "No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit."*

*And he said, "Into what then were you immersed?" And they said, "Into John's immersion."*

*And Paul said, "John immersed with the immersion of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus."*

*And when they heard this, they were immersed into the name of the Lord Jesus.*

*And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying.*

*And there were in all about twelve men.*

See ADDENDUM O for a map of Paul's third missionary journey.

Paul, at last, was permitted to begin the work on which he had set his mind when, on his previous trip, he was *forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia* (Acts 16:6).

Also, he finally was able fulfill the promise that he had made to the Ephesians as he made his way homeward, at the close of his last missionary trip, *I will return to you again if God wills," he set sail from Ephesus.* (Acts 18:21)

This passage, as well as the previous paragraph, describing Apollos, makes it apparent that even after Pentecost, John's immersion was still being preached in some places.

When Paul encountered these disciples, he seemed to have sensed some defect in their spiritual state. His question, *Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed*, indicates that he sensed that the defect was in the absence of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Their answer, *No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit*, confirmed his suspicions. They knew nothing of the Pentecostal event that had taken place about twenty years previously.

Paul's question clearly indicates that he considered the reception of the Holy Spirit, along with forgiveness of sins, to take place when one is immersed into Christ (as Peter declared in his Pentecostal sermon, Acts 2:38).

When Paul heard their reply, *we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit*, he informed them of the finished work of Christ and that John's immersion was preparatory for the coming Savior. Obviously trusting Paul, they immediately submitted to Paul's immersing them *into the name of the Lord Jesus*.

Then, evidently to assure them that the Holy Spirit was more than just an idea, he laid hands on them, and the Holy Spirit fell on them, resulting in their speaking in languages unknown to them and prophesying.

As noted in the episode involving the Samaritans (Acts 8), only in that episode and in this one is there an example of impartation of the Spirit, and resulting phenomena, through the laying on of hands. As noted in the discussion of that episode (pages 45-46 of these notes), when the usual pattern is broken, there must be a reason for doing so. One probable reason for breaking the normal pattern, in this instance, was to give immediate and undeniable evidence to these disciples that there is a Holy Spirit. These immediate manifestations would have removed any uncertainty.



### **Preaching in the Synagogue and the School of Tyrannus Acts 19:8-12**

*And he entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.*

*But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the multitude, he withdrew from them and took away the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.*

*And this took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.*

*And God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out.*

After immersing the twelve, Paul then followed his usual practice, of going into the synagogue and proclaiming the Gospel revelation of the Kingdom of God.

Earlier, in his previous short visit to Ephesus, the congregation and rulers of the synagogue asked Paul to tarry in the city and tell them more about the message that he was delivering.

This time, during an extended stay, for three months the synagogue authorities allowed Paul to present the case for Jesus, His death, and resurrection. Then, as elsewhere the usual pattern developed.

- The Truth is presented earnestly by Paul
- Obstinacy and vigorous opposition to Paul's message
- Separation from the synagogue to a nearby venue.

Earlier, when Paul encountered strong opposition in the synagogue at Corinth, he was able to move the scene of his preaching to the house of Titus Justus, which was located next to the synagogue (Acts 18:7)

Here, in Ephesus, he moved his venue to the school of Tyrannus.

The schools in the region typically held classes in the morning when the temperature was cooler and were closed in the afternoons. It was the custom in Ephesus (as well as throughout Ionia) for the populace to take a siesta and slumber in the afternoon. Lake and Cadbury state that more people were asleep at 1 P.M., than 1 A.M.<sup>148 149</sup>

Later, in a valedictory address to the Ephesian elders, Paul stated, *I have coveted no one's silver or gold or clothes. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me.* (Acts 20:33-34)

Therefore, it is probable that Paul worked his trade as a tentmaker in the mornings, then taught in the school of Tyrannus in the afternoons, when the school was not in session.

Paul's zeal must have impacted many in the synagogue, who were willing to forego their siesta in order to follow Paul to the Tyrannus lecture hall.

For two years, Paul continued in this work, while some of his colleagues carried out missionary activities in other cities of the region. No doubt people from the surrounding regions heard

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<sup>148</sup> Kirsopp Lake, Henry Joel Cadbury, *The Beginnings of Christianity* 1.4 (London, Macmillan Publishers) 1920 page 239

<sup>149</sup> <https://israeljerusalem.com/school-of-tyrannus.htm>

about what was happening in Ephesus and they came to the city to hear and see what was happening through the God-empowered ministry of Paul. Perhaps all seven of the churches of Asia (the Roman province of that name), addressed in John's Revelation, were founded during this period (Revelation chapters 2-3).

The term, *extraordinary miracles*, catches our attention, because all true miracles are *extraordinary*. Even so, there are those instances in which the means of bringing about the miracle are unusual. For example, the healing effect of Peter's shadow (Acts 5:15) and the healing of those who touched the fringe of Jesus' cloak (Mark 5:27-34)

The pieces of material (*handkerchiefs or aprons* verse 12), probably were those with which Paul adorned himself while engaged in tentmaking and leather working – the sweat-rags that were tied around his head and the aprons about his waist.<sup>150</sup> There was no intrinsic power in these items, the healing lay in the powerful name of Jesus. Not only was Paul declaring the name of Jesus, but it was by the authority of Jesus and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, that he was preaching and being God's agent for miracles.

### **Exorcists exposed and books of magic burned Acts 19:13-20**

*But also some of the Jewish exorcists, who went from place to place, attempted to name over those who had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, "I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches."*

*And seven sons of one Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this.*

*And the evil spirit answered and said to them, "I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?"*

*And the man, in whom was the evil spirit, leaped on them and subdued all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.*

*And this became known to all, both Jews and Greeks, who lived in Ephesus; and fear fell upon them all and the name of the Lord Jesus was being magnified.*

*Many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices.*

*And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of all; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing.*

Traveling Jewish exorcists were somewhat respected in the Roman world. In their exorcisms, they would use meaningless words that they claimed to have received from Solomon.<sup>151</sup> They naturally thought that the secret of Paul's power was in the words that spoke, rather than the power's being in the truth being communicated in those words.

This episode is a clear example of the fact that the name, *Jesus*, is not some magic charm. One can use the name of Jesus, legitimately, only if Jesus has authorized doing so, because to do something in His name is to do it as if He were the one doing it.

These Jewish exorcists thought that there was power in just the name, *Jesus*, totally apart from the person, Jesus.

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<sup>150</sup> The two Greek terms are of Latin origin. Greek: σουδαρια' Latin: *sudaria*, the Latin word for "sweat rags." Greek: σιμικίνθια Latin: *semicinctia*, the Latin word for "aprons."

<sup>151</sup> An informative and interesting article on Jewish exorcism is available at the *My Jewish Learning* website <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/jewish-exorcism/>

The Jewish exorcists who were seven sons of Sceva took a demoniac into a room where they could attempt an exorcism, using the name, *Jesus*. They may have done this inside a house so that any failure would not be observed.

The evil spirit knew quite well the name of Jesus, as well as Jesus' representative Paul, but by what right were these exorcists claiming the authority to use that name. There was no power in the name without Jesus' authority to use His name – to do something in His behalf.

The evil spirit that inhabited the demoniac was enraged by the wickedness of these exorcists and it imparted abnormal strength to the man it possessed. The demoniac viscously attacked the exorcists, tearing off their clothes and battering them so that they ran out of the house, naked and bruised, to escape the assault. No doubt those who saw them laughed and mocked them, not knowing exactly what had taken place.

When what happened to the Jewish exorcists did become known, a fearful reverence for Jesus' name resulted. This brought about the conversion of many, even those who were practitioners of magic arts. They burned the expensive books containing the incantations and magic ceremonies.

It became apparent to everyone that this Christianity was not just another religion, but that it was built upon the greatest truth ever imparted to humanity.

The churches of the region began to grow exponentially.

### **Paul makes plans for the future Acts 19:21-22**

*Now after these things were finished, Paul purposed in the spirit to go to Jerusalem after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome." And having sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while.*

The period of Paul's ministry in Ephesus had come to an end. It had been a very fruitful two and a half years. Christianity had established a firm foothold on the eastern shore of the Aegean Sea, as had previously been done on the western shore. The young churches of Asia could be left to continue their life of fellowship and witness under the direction of the Holy Spirit. There were personal dangers during this season, of which little is said in Acts. However, in Paul's letters these are mentioned.<sup>152</sup>

Paul's policy to not build on another man's foundation (Romans 15:20) meant that Egypt or Cyrene were not on his list.

There already was a Christian community in Rome but Paul wanted to visit Rome on his way to Spain.

- *whenever I go to Spain-- for I hope to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for a while--* (Romans 15:24)
- *Therefore, when I have finished this, and have put my seal on this fruit of theirs, I will go on by way of you to Spain.* (Romans 15:28)

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<sup>152</sup> I Corinthians 15:32; II Corinthians 8-11. Some are of the opinion that one or more of the frequent imprisonments that Paul mentions in II Corinthians 11:23 may have been endured in Ephesus.

Spain was the most western outpost of Roman civilization. For Paul, it was the new Macedonia calling him to come over and plant the faith among the unevangelized inhabitants. We do not have a record that makes clear whether or not Paul ever made it to Spain.

Luke does not mention the main reason for Paul's desire to visit Jerusalem but in his own writings, he made it clear that he wished to be there, along with delegates from the Gentile churches, in order to hand over to the Jerusalem leaders the funds that these churches had accumulated for the relief of the Jerusalem brethren.<sup>153</sup>

### **The Riot in Ephesus Acts 19:23-28**

*And about that time there arose no small disturbance concerning the Way.*

*For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, was bringing no little business to the craftsmen;*

*these he gathered together with the workmen of similar trades, and said, "Men, you know that our prosperity depends upon this business. And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable number of people, saying that gods made with hands are no gods at all.*

*And not only is there danger that this trade of ours fall into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis be regarded as worthless and that she whom all of Asia and the world worship should even be dethroned from her magnificence."*

*And when they heard this and were filled with rage, they began crying out, saying, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"*

Three episodes in Ephesus have been recorded by Luke.

- The incident with the twelve disciples who knew only the immersion of John
- The program of discussions in the school of Tyrannus
- The encounter with the magicians

Now comes the fourth episode with the silversmiths, that took place shortly before Paul's planned departure from Ephesus.

The cult of the Ephesian Artemis existed in Ephesus before the Greek settlement of that area. Artemis is a non-Greek goddess and was venerated as the protector of wild creatures.<sup>154</sup>

Artemis' temple, which existed in the First Century, replaced the one that was destroyed by fire in 356 B.C. The temple that existed in Paul's day was one the seven wonders of the ancient world. It covered an area four times larger than the Parthenon in Athens. It was supported by 127 pillars, each sixty feet high, and adorned with sculptures by Praxiteles and other great sculptors of that era. It stood about one and a half miles northeast of the city.

The silversmiths regarded their guild as being under the special patronage of Artemis. Among the things that they manufactured were miniature silver niches, containing the image of the goddess. In these niches her worshippers brought their offerings to the temple. The silversmiths became alarmed, when the number of converts to Christianity reached such proportions that the market for their products began to seriously diminish.

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<sup>153</sup> I Corinthians 16:1-4; II Corinthians 8:1-9:15; Romans 15:25-28

<sup>154</sup> The King James translators substituted the Roman name for *Artemis*, i.e. *Diana*. The Greek text of Acts has the original name, ἄρτεμις *artemis*.

Demetrius, a prominent member of the guild of silversmiths, called a meeting of the guild and others who worked with the guild in making the sacred objects.

He stirred up the guild and its associates, to the point that a mass protest was launched against the subversive propaganda being spread by Paul and his associates. Some of the later manuscripts add that Demetrius' hearers rushed out into the street. However, this is missing in the earlier manuscripts.

### **The mob demonstration in the theatre Acts 19:29-34**

*And the city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed with one accord into the theater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia.*

*And when Paul wanted to go into the assembly, the disciples would not let him.*

*And also some of the Asiarchs who were friends of his sent to him and repeatedly urged him not to venture into the theater.*

*So then, some were shouting one thing and some another, for the assembly was in confusion, and the majority did not know for what cause they had come together.*

*And some of the crowd concluded it was Alexander, since the Jews had put him forward; and having motioned with his hand, Alexander was intending to make a defense to the assembly.*

*But when they recognized that he was a Jew, a single outcry arose from them all as they shouted for about two hours, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"*

The silversmith's loud and emotional outbursts, *Great is Artemis of the Ephesians*, stirred the excitement of the populace, resulting in the birth of an emotional and irrational mob.

The theatre of Ephesus was cut out of the western slope of Mount Pion. It would accommodate 25,000 people and a civic assembly (an ἐκκλησία - *ecclesia*<sup>155</sup>) was held there three times each month.

Evidently, the mob rushed to the theatre, as if the citizenry were constituting itself as a meeting of the assembly, but a highly irregular one.

As the mob rushed to the theatre, some of them grabbed two of Paul's companions, Gaius and Aristarchus<sup>156</sup> and dragged them into the theatre with them.

The crowd had not been able to lay hands on Paul, but as soon as he heard what was happening, he prepared to go and face the assembly in person. The Ephesian Christians forcibly prevented him from doing so.

Even the leading citizens of Ephesus, the Asiarchs<sup>157</sup> sent more than one message to him, telling him to lay low. This is an interesting bit of information, because it means that some of the Asiarchs probably had become believers, and thus, were Paul's friends.

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<sup>155</sup> This is the Greek term that translators have rendered as, *church*. A church is an assembly. It is rendered as, *church*, seventy-nine times in the New Testament.

<sup>156</sup> Gaius had joined the traveling team at Derbe. Aristarchus had joined the team when it left Thessalonica (Acts 20:4)

<sup>157</sup> The title, *Asiarch*, was given to leading citizens of those cities in the province of Asia. Those so designated, usually held some leadership office in the league. The term also was given to ten men of wealth and reputation who were chosen annually to preside over the athletic games of the province.

Luke's description of the crowd, *So then, some were shouting one thing and some another, for the assembly was in confusion, and the majority did not know for what cause they had come together*, indicates that the crowd was stirred up by the emotions of Paul's enemies, but they did not know what they were protesting – they were just stirred up emotionally (crowd psychology).

The Jews of Ephesus wanted the mob to know that they had nothing to do with Paul and so they put forth one of their leaders, Alexander, to declare that they were as opposed to Paul as were the silversmiths.

However, when Alexander gestured to the crowd to listen to him, some of the crowd, recognizing him as a Jew assumed that he was the reason for the uproar. After all, the Jews opposed worshipping Artemis, that must be the reason for the mob's outcries.

So, in assumed opposition to Alexander, they cried out, *Great is Artemis of the Ephesians*, and this chant went on for two whole hours.

The town clerk sought to restore sanity to the gathered mob.

### **The town clerk calms the crowd Acts 19:35-41**

*And after quieting the multitude, the town clerk said, "Men of Ephesus, what man is there after all who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is guardian of the temple of the great Artemis, and of the image which fell down from heaven?"*

*Since then these are undeniable facts, you ought to keep calm and to do nothing rash.*

*For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of our goddess.*

*So then, if Demetrius and the craftsmen who are with him have a complaint against any man, the courts are in session and proconsuls are available; let them bring charges against one another. But if you want anything beyond this, it shall be settled in the lawful assembly.*

*For indeed we are in danger of being accused of a riot in connection with today's affair, since there is no real cause for it; and in this connection we shall be unable to account for this disorderly gathering."*

*And after saying this he dismissed the assembly.*

The town clerk was particularly alarmed by the riotous mob. The town clerk was the executive officer of the civic assembly who oversaw the drafting of decrees and then, when they were passed, had them engraved. He also acted as the liaison between the local civic government and the Roman provincial authorities who had their headquarters in Ephesus. He realized that the Roman authorities might hold him responsible for this riotous assembly and impose some sort of severe penalty on the city. So, he did his best to calm the crowd.

He declared that they need not fear that the honor of the great goddess, Artemis, would be destroyed. He declared that everyone knew that Ephesus was the guardian of her temple. He then stated what followers of Artemis believed - that the image of Artemis was not created by any man, but that her image had fallen down from heaven.

Therefore, since these things were undeniable (according to the Ephesian beliefs), such riotous behavior was uncalled for and out of place.

He then stated what everyone in the crowd knew, that there were regular court days that were the opportunity for Demetrius and his associates to bring any legitimate charges against anyone. If they had a complaint, they should bring their complaints to the court assembly.

Since there was not an appropriate reason for the assembly, he dismissed the crowd and put an end to the protest.

### **Paul's second visit to Macedonia and Greece Acts 20:1-6**

*And after the uproar had ceased, Paul sent for the disciples and when he had exhorted them and taken his leave of them, he departed to go to Macedonia.*

*And when he had gone through those districts and had given them much exhortation, he came to Greece.*

*And there he spent three months, and when a plot was formed against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he determined to return through Macedonia.*

*And he was accompanied by Sopater of Berea, the son of Pyrrhus; and by Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia. But these had gone on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas.*

*And we sailed from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and came to them at Troas within five days; and there we stayed seven days.*

This section describes significant travel, but with few details. After the Ephesian uproar, Paul called the Ephesian converts together and bid them farewell. He was returning to Macedonia.

In II Corinthians 2:12-13, Paul describes a portion of this trip from Ephesus to Macedonia. Leaving Ephesus, he went north to Troas. He hoped to encounter Titus at Troas, and receive a report on the situation in Corinth. When that did not happen, in spite of the fact that he had significant ministry in Troas, Paul experienced significant anxiety.

*Now when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ and when a door was opened for me in the Lord,<sup>13</sup> I had no rest for my spirit, not finding Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I went on to Macedonia. (II Corinthians 2:12-13)*

Paul hoped to meet Titus somewhere along the road, as he traveled through Macedonia. Indeed, that did happen. The great news that Titus brought concerning the state of affairs in the Corinthian Church brought Paul great relief and joy.

*For even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted on every side: conflicts without, fears within. But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus; and not only by his coming, but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you, as he reported to us your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me; so that I rejoiced even more. (II Corinthians 7:5-7)*

After arriving in Macedonia, he would have visited the churches in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. Luke does not inform us as to how long Paul spent in Macedonia. It seems to have been a prolonged visit.

When he left Macedonia, he traveled south to Greece. Although the Grecian cities in which Paul spent time are not named in Luke's summary, they would have been Athens and Corinth. These are the only two cities in Greece, in which Paul had established churches. The months that Paul spent in Greece would have been the winter months of 56-57 A.D.

After Paul had spent three months in Greece, he planned to sail back to Syrian Antioch, from whence he had been launched on each of his missionary trips.

Paul had seven men traveling with him. These men were representatives of the churches that had put together a collection for the struggling Christians in Jerusalem and Judea.

*Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also.*

*On the first day of every week let each one of you put aside and save, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come.*

*And when I arrive, whomever you may approve, I shall send them with letters to carry your gift to Jerusalem; and if it is fitting for me to go also, they will go with me. (1 Corinthians 16:1-4)*

When Paul learned of a plot to kill him, probably after he had boarded the ship for Syria, he changed his plans and walked north to Philippi. The seven men who were carrying the offering to Judea, proceeded with the original plan, and sailed to Troas, where they waited for Paul's arrival.

After arriving at the Philippian port of Neapolis, he boarded a ship and sailed to Troas. As noted earlier, in Acts 16:11, the trip from Troas to Neapolis, took only two days. This time, traveling the same route, took five days. The winds were not as cooperative on this west to east trip, as they had been on the east to west trip.

This is the first time that Luke uses the pronoun, **we**, since Acts 16:6-7, the account of the team's arrival in Philippi and the encounter with the demon-possessed maiden. Therefore, it is clear that Luke remained in Philippi when the team left Philippi to travel south through Macedonia, ultimately arriving in Greece (Athens and Corinth [17:15-18:11]).

Luke does not name himself as accompanying Paul when he departed from Philippi. He names only the seven men who, as representatives of their churches are custodians of the offerings taken for the saints in Judea. Yet, it is clear that Luke rejoined Paul at this juncture, since he uses the pronoun, **we**.

#### **A Lord's Day meeting at Troas Acts 20:7-12**

*And on the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to depart the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight. And there were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered together.*

*And there was a certain young man named Eutychus sitting on the window sill, sinking into a deep sleep; and as Paul kept on talking, he was overcome by sleep and fell down from the third floor, and was picked up dead.*

*But Paul went down and fell upon him and after embracing him, he said, "Do not be troubled, for his life is in him."*

*And when he had gone back up, and had broken the bread and eaten, he talked with them a long while, until daybreak, and so departed.*

*And they took away the boy alive, and were greatly comforted.*

The church at Troas met on the first day of the week, i.e., Sunday. When comment is made concerning the day on which the early churches met, it always is on Sunday. This is consistent with the earlier cited quote from I Corinthians 6:1ff, indicating that on the first day of the week, Christians should set aside funds to be sent to Judea. Later writings of the church confirm this as being the ongoing practice in the Church. Here is a quote from Justin Martyr, describing the church in 150 A.D.

“And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs,



and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons.”<sup>158</sup>

The expression, *to break bread*, is an idiomatic term meaning to share a meal. This is the same use of the term that we saw in Acts 2:46, *...and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart.*

This custom of sharing a meal as a part of the Sunday meeting is reflected in Paul’s rebuke of the Corinthian Church, for incorporating the Lord’s Supper into a church-wide dinner, rather than observing the Lord’s Supper as a separate and sanctified event (I Corinthians 11:20ff.)

Later in the passage before us, the same distinction is displayed.

- The church gathered together to *break bread*, i.e. have a meal.
- Paul addressed the church.
- Eutychus fell out of the window and was revived.
- The church then *broke **the** bread*, which had become an idiomatic expression for partaking of the Lord’s Supper.<sup>159</sup>

Since many in the early church were slaves, in all probability, the meeting did not begin until evening. The group met on the third floor of an unidentified building. Torches would have been lit to provide light in the room. How long Paul talked is uncertain, but he did bring a prolonged address – until midnight.

In time, the air in the room would have grown heavy from the smoke of the torches. One of Paul’s auditors, Eutychus, possibly to get some fresh air, sat in a window – an opening in the wall. Even so, no doubt having worked a long day, Eutychus was tired, and even with the help of fresh air, he fell asleep during Paul’s talk. He fell three stories and when the church members rushed down to pick him up, they saw that he was dead.

Paul, however, trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit, embraced the young man and said, *Do not be troubled, for his life is in him.* Two possible understandings present themselves.

- Eutychus appeared to be dead, but had not totally expired. Paul, embracing him, determined that this was the case and gave assurance of such to those who had picked up Eutychus.
- Eutychus was dead, and Paul, through the power of the Holy Spirit restored Eutychus. His comment being similar to that of Jesus, when he described a dead girl as *asleep*, then restored her to life (Matthew 9:23-26; Mark 5:38-42; Luke 8:49-55)

We must leave the question unanswered, as to which of these two interpretations is correct.

After observing the Lord’s Supper, Paul resumed talking to those assembled, until sunrise on Monday.

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<sup>158</sup> Justin Martyr, First Apology, chapter 67 (New Advent.org)

<sup>159</sup> The same distinction is made in Acts 2:42 – *the breaking of the bread*, in contrast to Acts 2:47, *breaking bread from house to house*. Note that the definite article, *the*, is missing in 2:47

### **From Troas to Miletus Acts 20:13-16**

*But we, going ahead to the ship, set sail for Assos, intending from there to take Paul on board; for thus he had arranged it, intending himself to go by land.*

*And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and came to Mitylene.*

*And sailing from there, we arrived the following day opposite Chios; and the next day we crossed over to Samos; and the day following we came to Miletus.*

*For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus in order that he might not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be in Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost.*

The ship on which the traveling team intended to sail, was scheduled to depart at daybreak. Paul told his fellow-travelers to go ahead and board the ship, but he would remain a bit longer in Troas, possibly to be assured of Eutychus' full restoration.

The ship that they boarded, rather than going directly to Miletus, which was the harbor that served Ephesus, made stops along the way: Assos, Mitylene, Chios, Samos, then, Miletus.

After leaving Troas, the ship had to round Cape Lectum in order to get to Assos. Paul, after a slightly delayed departure, took the overland shortcut to Assos, a walk of about twenty miles, where he joined his companions on board the ship.

Paul was hoping to arrive in Jerusalem in time for Pentecost. Therefore, he did not plan to visit the church at Ephesus, but, rather, as soon as possible to board a ship at Miletus which would take him and his companions to the port near Jerusalem.

### **Paul summons the Ephesian elders and bids farewell to the Ephesian Church Acts 20:17-38**

Paul desired to communicate with the Ephesian believers, but if he had left the port of Miletus, and traveled the forty miles, inland to Ephesus, he might miss the first ship sailing to his desired destination. Therefore, he summoned the elders to come to him. If they arrived before his departure, he could rendezvous with them. If he sailed before their arrival – well, so be it..

Miletus was located on a small peninsula that jutted from the south into the bay of the Meander River. The ancient bay made an obstacle for direct land travel from Miletus to Ephesus. The messenger that Paul dispatched to Ephesus asking them to join him in Miletus probably made the trip by boat, up the river to Ephesus. The elders would have traveled by boat down the Meander River to Miletus.

The speech recorded in this section is the only speech of Paul's delivered to Christians that Luke has recorded.

This speech falls under several headings. and we will examine it accordingly.

#### **A. Retrospect on his time in Ephesus Acts 20:18-21**

*And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church.*

*And when they had come to him, he said to them,*

*"You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews;*

*how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house, solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Prior to any exhortation and discussion of his future, Paul reminds the elders of his experiences in Ephesus: his humble and faithful service, as well as the suffering he endured because of the hostility and hatred that the Jews had toward him.

Yet, in spite of these things, he had faithfully sought to teach them and declare truths of the Gospel that were important for their spiritual survival.

**B. Paul's view of his life, and prospects for the future Acts 20:22-25**

*And now, behold, bound in Spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me.*

*But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, in order that I may finish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.*

*And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will see my face no more.*

Paul stated that he was controlled by the Holy Spirit and that the Holy Spirit had informed him (sometimes through prophecies given to him by others) that the journey on which the Holy Spirit was taking him, would include suffering.

Even so, he was not concerned about self-preservation. His only concern was to finish the course that Christ had marked out for him. The abiding purpose of the course laid out for Paul was to preach the Gospel in spite of all opposition.

He sensed that death or some other obstacle lay ahead that would not allow him to return to Ephesus, and so, this was, "Goodbye." Paul was bidding farewell to the Aegean world to which he had been ministering for seven or eight years.

His future plans were entering a season of ministry in the Mediterranean, if he were allowed to leave Jerusalem safely.<sup>160</sup>

**C. Paul's charge to the elders Acts 20:26-31**

*Therefore, I testify to you this day, that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.*

*Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.*

*I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.*

*Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.*

Paul was speaking to the elders, and he told them that the Holy Spirit had made them:

- Overseers – the Greek term is ἐπίσκοπος (*episkopos*) the word which has been Anglicized as. *episcopal*, indicating a religious authority over a group of churches. This is a total misuse of the term, because the local elders are told that they are the

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<sup>160</sup> Romans 15:23-29

ἐπίσκοπος, the overseers of the local church. The term never is used in Scripture for an ecclesiastical office that oversees a group of clergy or churches.

- Shepherds – the Greek term is ποιμαίνω (*poimaino*). When Jerome translated the Greek into Latin in the Fourth Century, he rendered the term, literally, which in Latin is *pastor*. Thus, the term, *pastor*, entered the English language and now is incorrectly used for a single leader of a church. Such is never the case in the New Testament.

One of the main responsibilities of elders is to be on guard against those who would bring division in the local church, especially those who through some false teaching draw followers unto themselves. Sadly, Paul’s prediction that there would be those who would do this at Ephesus, could be said of many local churches throughout history.

#### **D. Paul’s final admonition Acts 20:32-35**

*And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.*

*I have coveted no one's silver or gold or clothes. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me.*

*In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."*

Paul now was leaving them for one final time and no longer would be available to counsel and instruct them. Therefore, he surrendered them to God, who could/would build them up and for their faithful service, God would give them an inheritance among the sanctified.

Once again, he called attention to the behavior that he had modeled among them and urged them to follow his example of self-giving.

#### **E. An affectionate parting Acts 20:36-38**

*And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.*

*And they began to weep aloud and embraced Paul, and repeatedly kissed him, grieving especially over the word which he had spoken, that they should see his face no more.*

*And they were accompanying him to the ship.*

My what an emotional parting. Understandably so, given all that Paul and endured in Ephesus in behalf of the Gospel and his care for the saints in that city.

After weeping, embracing, and kissing their dear father in the faith, they escorted him to the ship which was ready to sail southeast toward Palestine.

#### **Miletus to Tyre Acts 21:1-6**

*And when it came about that we had parted from them and had set sail, we ran a straight course to Cos and the next day to Rhodes and from there to Patara;*

*and having found a ship crossing over to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set sail.*

*And when we had come in sight of Cyprus, leaving it on the left, we kept sailing to Syria and landed at Tyre; for there the ship was to unload its cargo.*

*And after looking up the disciples, we stayed there seven days; and they kept telling Paul through the Spirit not to set foot in Jerusalem.*

*And when it came about that our days there were ended, we departed and started on our journey, while they all, with wives and children, escorted us until we were out of the city. And after kneeling down on the beach and praying, we said farewell to one another. Then we went on board the ship, and they returned home again.*

Luke carefully documents their trip: from Miletus to Cos, to Rhodes, to Patara, and passing Cyprus they finally docked at Tyre, where there was a church.

Acts does not tell us when or how the church at Tyre was founded. In all probability, it was founded when members of the Jerusalem church scattered in all directions, especially northward, following the martyrdom of Stephen.

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

*So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone. (Acts 11:19)*

We are not told what day of the week the team arrived in Tyre, but since they were there for seven days, they would have attended a church service on Sunday. In that meeting, Paul and his companions would have become acquainted with the entire church, not just the leaders.

Some in the church had the gift of prophecy and they, through the Holy Spirit, kept warning Paul about what was ahead for him in Jerusalem. They urged Paul to abandon his plans to go there. This was an echo of what had been said to Paul earlier, and his response here was the same as it was when he gave his parting words to the Ephesian elders:

*And now, behold, bound in spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me.*

*But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, in order that I may finish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God. (Acts 20:22-24)*

It would be natural for Paul's friends to urge him to abandon his plans, but he was convinced that the Holy Spirit had directed him to proceed to Jerusalem. Even though he prophetically was warned about what lay ahead for him in Jerusalem, he was determined to follow God's direction in spite of the consequences.

The Elders from Ephesus had been longtime friends of Paul. Such was not true of the Christians at Tyre. Prior to this week-long visit they had never met., Even so, the bonds of Christian love were quickly formed, and they were bonded to one another as deeply as those with whom Paul had long-standing relationships.

All of the Christians in Tyre, including the families with children, accompanied the missionaries to the beach where they were to board the ship for the next leg of their journey. What a beautiful scene, when Paul and his companions, as well as the members of this church knelt together and prayed with an emotional farewell.

We wonder if there were tears in the eyes of the Christians as they returned home from the beach, even as had been true when Paul bid farewell to the Ephesian elders. (Acts 20:37)

### **From Tyre to Caesarea Acts 21:7-14**

*And when we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais; and after greeting the brethren, we stayed with them for a day.*

*And on the next day we departed and came to Caesarea; and entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him.*

*Now this man had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses.*

*And as we were staying there for some days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands, and said, "This is what the Holy Spirit says: 'In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'"*

*And when we had heard this, we as well as the local residents began begging him not to go up to Jerusalem.*

*Then Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."*

*And since he would not be persuaded, we fell silent, remarking, "The will of the Lord be done!"*

Luke continues to carefully document their trip, bit by bit. When they left Tyre their ship docked at Ptolemais. In the Old Testament, Ptolemais was known as Acco (Judges 1:31) and that is the name by which it is known today. In Greco-Roman times, it was known as Ptolemais. In the Crusader era, Acco was called, *Acre*.<sup>161</sup>

After spending a day with the church at Ptolemais, the company proceeded on southward to Caesarea (see ADDENDUM O). Whether they took another ship to Caesarea or walked, the text does not say.

At Caesarea they were hosted by Philip, whom Luke described as, *the evangelist*. This title distinguished him from Philip, one of the Twelve (Matthew 10:2-4, etc.), but the title was appropriate considering the history of Philip:

- We first met him as one of the deacons chosen by the Jerusalem Church to oversee the distribution of food to the widows of the Church (Acts 6:3-6)
- When the church was scattered by the persecution of Saul, Philip went to Samaria and had great evangelistic success in that city (Acts 8:5-25)
- Next, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, he went down to the road that runs between Jerusalem and Gaza, and there he encountered the Ethiopian Eunuch, to whom he presented the Gospel and then immersed him (Acts 8:26-39)
- The Holy Spirit caught up Philip, after he immersed the Eunuch. The Spirit then deposited Philip at Azotus, which was on the Mediterranean Sea, twenty miles north of Gaza. He then traveled north, preaching the Gospel in every community until he reached Caesarea, where he settled down and became a family man (Acts 8:40)

(See ADDENDUM H for the geography and path that Philip took in the last two episodes)

After settling down and marrying, Philip had four daughters, all of whom had the gift of prophecy. Papias of Hierapolis,<sup>162</sup> states that several years later, Philip and his daughters, along with other Palestinian Christians, migrated to the province of Asia and spent their remaining days there. The tombs of Philip and at least two of his daughters were described as being seen at Hierapolis in the Lycus Valley at the end of the second century.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> The full name that was given to this city by the Crusaders was St. Jean D'Acre, So named by the Crusader Knights of St. John.

<sup>162</sup> Papias lived 62-130 A.D. and his writings record much information concerning the early years of the Church. The information cited above is quoted by Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House) 1995, pages

<sup>163</sup> Monte A. Shanks, *Papias and the New Testament* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2013) [p295](#).

Agabus enters the narrative again. Agabus was one of the prophets who came from Jerusalem to Antioch of Syria, when Barnabas and Paul were in their early ministry to the Antiochian church. He was the prophet who, at that time, predicted the world-wide famine to which the Antiochians responded by collecting an offering which they sent to Jerusalem to help their fellow believers in Judea. (Acts 11:27-29)

Once again, Agabus was the bearer of a dire prophecy, this time, concerning Paul. His prediction of Paul's arrest produced the same response at Caesarea that had been displayed by the saints at every stop along way. This time, not only the Christians of Caesarea, but the members of the traveling team joined the Caesareans in asking Paul to abort his plans to go to Jerusalem: *And when we had heard this, we as well as the local residents began begging him not to go up to Jerusalem.*

Paul continued to be motivated by his sense that he was being directed by the Holy Spirit *And now, behold, bound in Spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem...* (Acts 20:22)

Consequently, his response was consistent with what it had been, every time the saints had begged him to not travel on to Jerusalem, *What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.*

The team and the Caesarean Christians realized that Paul could not be persuaded to remain behind and let the team proceed without him. Therefore, with a degree of resignation, they responded, *The will of the Lord be done!*

Paul's response and the Caesarean Christian's reply, echo the Lord's own prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, *"Father, if Thou art willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Thine be done."* (Luke 22:42)

### **The team travels to Jerusalem Acts 21:15-16**

*And after these days we got ready and started on our way up to Jerusalem.*

*And some of the disciples from Caesarea also came with us, taking us to Mnason of Cyprus, a disciple of long standing with whom we were to lodge.*

After spending several days in Caesarea, they prepared what they would need for their 64 mile walk to Jerusalem. The trip probably took the better part of a week.

An interesting element in the account is the fact they were accompanied by some Christians from Caesarea who knew of a place in Jerusalem where they probably could stay. Most of the members of the Jerusalem Church were Jewish believers and probably would not be open to hosting a group of men that included Gentiles. However, Mnason, from Cyprus, was one of the small Hellenists that were still in the mother-church and his home was the destination toward which the group traveled.

The Greek adjective describing Mnason, rendered as, *long standing*, is ἀρχαίω (*archaioh*), which is based on the noun, ἀρχή (*archay*). The noun carries the idea of *from the beginning*. Therefore, it is probable that Mnason, who hosted the group, had been a member of the Jerusalem church since the birth of the Church on Pentecost.

Some speculate that Luke's account of the early days of the Church is based on information that he received from Mnason.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> W.M. Ramsey, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament* (New York, Hodder & Stoughton) 1915 page 309, note 2

### **Meeting with James and the elders Acts 21:17-26**

*And when we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.*

*And now the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present.*

*And after he had greeted them, he began to relate one by one the things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.*

*And when they heard it they began glorifying God;*

*and they said to him, "You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed, and they are all zealous for the Law; and they have been told about you, that you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs.*

*What, then, is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come.*

*Therefore, do this that we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow; take them and purify yourself along with them, and pay their expenses in order that they may shave their heads; and all will know that there is nothing to the things which they have been told about you, but that you yourself also walk orderly, keeping the Law.*

*But concerning the Gentiles who have believed, we wrote, having decided that they should abstain from meat sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication."*

*Then Paul took the men, and the next day, purifying himself along with them, went into the temple, giving notice of the completion of the days of purification, until the sacrifice was offered for each one of them.*

The *brethren who received us gladly*, would have been Mnason and his associates, probably Hellenistic Jews.

The next day, after arriving, Paul and the others who had traveled with him from Caesarea (*Paul went in with us*), went to James' home and all of the Jerusalem elders were present to greet the arrivals from Caesarea. James' home must have been a building of some size to accommodate both the travelers that had arrived with Paul and all of the Jerusalem elders. We are not told how many elders were in the Jerusalem Church, but since the size of the Jerusalem congregation consisted of *many thousands there are among the Jews who have believed*, it is possible that the number of elders was seventy, which was the traditional figure for the number of elders in Israel.<sup>165</sup>

Paul's narrative of all that God had accomplished on both sides of the Aegean brought great joy to his hearers. Also, although Luke does not mention it, when the representatives of the Gentile churches (Acts 20:4) presented the offerings that their churches had sent to Jerusalem, there would have been additional reason for rejoicing.

However, in spite of the great joy, there was a serious anxiety that the visit of Paul might cause serious problems. There was a rumor in Jerusalem that Paul was telling Jews to forsake all of the Mosaic Law and to not circumcise their male children, nor observe any of the Jewish customs. The thousands of Jews who had become believers, had accepted the rumor. Therefore, his presence in the Jerusalem had the potential for causing problems for the whole church.

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<sup>165</sup> Exodus 24:1; Number 11:15-17; Later in Jewish history, the Sanhedrin, the supreme court in Israel, during the Second Temple period, was composed of seventy elders and the High Priest.



In order to dispel this rumor, the Jerusalem elders had a plan. If Paul were to participate in one of the ancestral customs, the observers would realize that he was an observant and practicing Jew. Their proposal involved four of their members who had taken a Nazirite vow. If no time limit were put on these men when the vow was made, the vow would be in effect for thirty days.<sup>166</sup> During that time, they would be obligated to abstain from wine and any strong drink, as well as avoiding any defiling contact (e.g. a corpse), and they would not shave or cut their hair.

At the end of the vow period, they were to present an offering in the Temple, then cut their hair, which would be burned in a sacrificial fire.<sup>167</sup>

An Israelite, other than the Nazirite, could associate himself with the Nazirite by defraying the cost of his offering. This was considered to be a pious and charitable act, which would be greatly respected by all observers.

The elders proposed, therefore, that Paul should associate himself with these men who had taken the Nazirite vow and when they discharged their vow in the temple, he would pay the expenses involved.

Because Paul had returned from a long residence in Gentile societies, he would have to undergo a purification before he could partake in the ceremony. His purification had to be clearly distinguished from the Nazirite's purification.

The elders indicated that they had no intention of reversing their decree and imposing Jewish legal requirements on Gentile converts (Acts 15).

Paul agreed with the proposition. The phrase, *next day, purifying himself along with them*, probably referred to the initiation of Paul's purification process, because it took seven days to complete.

In doing this, Paul demonstrated one of his life principles,

*For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law, though not being myself under the Law, that I might win those who are under the Law;*

*to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, that I might win those who are without law.*

*To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some. (1 Corinthians 9:19-22)*

### **Riot in the Temple Acts 21:27-30**

*And when the seven days were almost over, the Jews from Asia, upon seeing him in the temple, began to stir up all the multitude and laid hands on him, crying out, "Men of Israel, come to our aid! This is the man who preaches to all men everywhere against our people, and the Law, and this place; and besides he has even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place."*

<sup>166</sup> [https://www.sefaria.org/Mishnah\\_Nazir.6.3?lang=bi](https://www.sefaria.org/Mishnah_Nazir.6.3?lang=bi)

<sup>167</sup> The offering consisted of one he-lamb, one ewe-lamb, one ram, and accompanying food and drink offerings (Numbers 6:14-15), accompanied by the hair offering. [https://www.sefaria.org/Mishnah\\_Nazir.6.5-6?lang=bi](https://www.sefaria.org/Mishnah_Nazir.6.5-6?lang=bi)

*For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with him, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple.*

*And all the city was aroused, and the people rushed together; and taking hold of Paul, they dragged him out of the temple; and immediately the doors were shut.*

The purification took seven days. There were special ceremonies on the third and seventh day of the purification process. This was true for one who was under a Nazarite vow, as well as any other sort of uncleanness of an Israelite that required purification.<sup>168</sup>

The purification was almost complete when a riot broke out. Jews from Asia, who were in the Temple, saw Paul and they determined to do more to him than they had been able to do to him in Ephesus (Acts 19).

Trophimus, the representative bringing the offering from Ephesus, was with Paul in Jerusalem. The Asian Jews recognized Trophimus, and when they saw Paul in the Court of Israel, discharging his ritual obligations, they assumed that Trophimus was with him. This would have been a capital offense. Gentiles could visit the outer court (sometimes called, *the Court of the Gentiles*), but Gentiles were forbidden to enter any of the inner courts, on the pain of death. Notices in both Greek and Latin were posted at the entrance of the inner courts, to warn Gentiles to go no further.<sup>169</sup> The Roman authorities in Jerusalem were so conciliatory of Jewish customs that they authorized the death penalty when such crimes against the Temple were committed.

The angry crowd dragged Paul out of the inner court, planning to kill him.

#### **Paul is rescued by the Romans Acts 21:31-36**

*And while they were seeking to kill him, a report came up to the commander of the Roman cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion.*

*And at once he took along some soldiers and centurions, and ran down to them; and when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.*

*Then the commander came up and took hold of him, and ordered him to be bound with two chains; and he began asking who he was and what he had done.*

*But among the crowd some were shouting one thing and some another, and when he could not find out the facts on account of the uproar, he ordered him to be brought into the barracks.*

*And when he got to the stairs, it so happened that he was carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob;<sup>36</sup> for the multitude of the people kept following behind, crying out, "Away with him!"*

Immediately northwest of the Temple stood the Roman Tower of Antonio. It was connected to the outer court of the temple by two flights of stairs, so that the Roman garrison housed in the

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<sup>168</sup> Numbers 19:12

<sup>169</sup> Two of these notices, both in Greek, have been discovered: one in 1871 and one in 1935. The text of the notices reads, *No foreigner may enter within the barricade which surrounds the temple and enclosure. Anyone who is caught trespassing will bear personal responsibility for his ensuing death.* C.S. Clermont-Ganneau, "Discovery of a Tablet from Herod's Temple," *Palestinian Exploration Quarterly*, 3, (1871), pp 132-133; J.H. Hiffe, "The ΘΑΝΑΤΟΣ inscription from Herod's Temple, *Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities of Palestine*, 6, (1936) pp. 1-3

tower could quickly intervene in the event of trouble in the Temple. The Tower was the garrison of an auxiliary cohort of Roman troops, under the command of a military tribune.<sup>170</sup>

Since *centurions* is in the plural, that means that there were at least two of them. A centurion was an officer over one-hundred men. So, given the fact that at least two centurions and a tribune were over the garrison, that means that the garrison housed a huge number of Roman soldiers.

As the mob, shouting threats, began to beat Paul, the sound of the uproar reached the tower and the commander of the troops was told about the riot. Immediately, the commander fulfilled the purpose for which the garrison existed – to put down trouble in the Temple.

The arrival of the Roman troops caused the mob, immediately, to stop beating Paul. The commander, assuming that Paul had done something wrong, ordered him to be shackled and then, asked the mob what Paul had done to cause the riot. As is often true of a mob, there was no clear answer to the tribune's inquiry – some shouted one thing and some another.

The commander ordered his soldiers to carry Paul up the stairs into the tower, where he intended to interrogate Paul. The shouting mob followed the soldiers carrying Paul.

### **Paul gets permission to address the crowd Acts 21:37-40; 22:1**

*And as Paul was about to be brought into the barracks, he said to the commander, "May I say something to you?"*

*And he said, "Do you know Greek? Then you are not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand men of the Assassins out into the wilderness?"*

*But Paul said, "I am a Jew of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no insignificant city; and I beg you, allow me to speak to the people."*

*And when he had given him permission, Paul, standing on the stairs, motioned to the people with his hand; and when there was a great hush, he spoke to them in the Hebrew dialect, saying, "Brethren and fathers, hear my defense which I now offer to you."*

Paul must have been a sorry sight, when the soldiers carrying Paul reached the top of the steps. He would have been bruised, battered, grimy, and disheveled. Even so, as he did so frequently, he took charge of the situation.

The tribune, trying to make some sense out of the riot, had jumped to a conclusion. Three years earlier, an Egyptian adventurer had appeared in Jerusalem, claiming to be a prophet. He led a large group of followers out to the Mount of Olives and told them to wait there, until at his command, the walls of the city would fall flat. When the walls fell, they were to march into the city, overthrow the Roman garrison and take possession of Jerusalem. Felix, the procurator of Judaea sent a body of troops to Mount of Olives. They killed many Jews and took others prisoner.

The Egyptian disappeared. Obviously, those whom he had duped would have hostile feelings toward him. It is not surprising that the tribune assumed that he had reappeared, and people were venting their rage on him. Therefore, he was surprised when Paul addressed him in educated Greek language, asking for permission to speak to the crowd below.

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<sup>170</sup> The Greek term rendered, *tribune*, is *χιλίαρχος* (*chiliarchos*) which literally means, *commander of a thousand*.

When the tribune learned that Paul was a Jew and a citizen of the illustrious city of Tarsus, he granted Paul's request. No doubt he expected Paul to speak about the incident and thus the tribune would learn what the uproar had been about.

When permission was given, the soldiers put Paul on his feet and appear to have released at least one of his arms, because the text says that Paul *motioned to the people with his hand*. When Paul began his defense in Hebrew, the Jews listened.

### **Paul's defense Acts 22:2-21**

Because this is a lengthy speech, we will examine it in sections.

#### A. Paul's Jewish credentials Acts 22:2-5

*And when they heard that he was addressing them in the Hebrew dialect, they became even more quiet; and he said,*

*"I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God, just as you all are today.*

*And I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons, as also the high priest and all the Council of the elders can testify.*

*From them I also received letters to the brethren, and started off for Damascus in order to bring even those who were there to Jerusalem as prisoners to be punished.*

Paul's speaking in the language of the audience, rather than in Latin or Greek, put a final end to the tumult.

He began by giving the crowd evidence of his background as an orthodox Jew. The fact that Paul, as a rabbinical student, was trained by Gamaliel was a weighty consideration.

### **EXCURSUS**

#### **Gamaliel**

According to tradition, Gamaliel succeeded his father, Simon, and his grandfather, the renowned sage Hillel (to whose school of thought he belonged), as *nasi* (president) of the Sanhedrin, the supreme Jewish court.

Gamaliel had the highest repute as teacher of the Law; he was the first to be given the title *rabban*. Like his grandfather, Gamaliel also was given the title *ha-Zaqen* (the Elder).

Gamaliel's renown is summed up in the words recorded in the Talmud: "When Rabban Gamaliel the Elder died, regard for the Torah [Jewish Law] ceased, and purity and piety died."

Paul could rightly say that no one in the crowd had been more zealous than he, for the superiority and reverential status of the Jewish Law. Even to the point of being responsible, not only for the imprisonment of Christians, but even for their death. This statement immediately brings to mind his role in the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7:54-60; 8:1a)

Should anyone doubt his claims, *the high priest and all the Council of the elders can testify* to the accuracy of what Paul was claiming to have been his zeal – even to the point of asking for and receiving a letter from the Jewish establishment that authorized him to capture and bring to Jerusalem any Jewish Christians he might find in Damascus.

## B. The Damascus Road encounter with the glorified Christ Acts 22:6-11

*And it came about that as I was on my way, approaching Damascus about noontime, a very bright light suddenly flashed from heaven all around me, and I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?'*

*And I answered, 'Who art Thou, Lord?' And He said to me, 'I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are persecuting.'*

*And those who were with me beheld the light, to be sure, but did not understand the voice of the One who was speaking to me.*

*And I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Arise and go on into Damascus; and there you will be told of all that has been appointed for you to do.'*

*But since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me, and came into Damascus.*

Paul described the light from heaven, that flashed all around him. In Paul's words, we have the report of what Luke recorded in Acts 9:1ff., with Paul's slant on some of the details.

As he fell to the ground, he heard the voice, *Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?* Then, in astonishment, the question, *Who art Thou, Lord,* and the unexpected answer, *I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are persecuting.*

It is of passing interest to note that even though the others in Paul's company saw the light, and heard the sound of the voice, were not blinded by the light, neither were they able to understand what was being said. The experience was Divinely orchestrated for Saul of Tarsus, who was being called to become the apostle Paul, the most aggressive evangelist in the history of the Church.

Because those with Saul/Paul had seen the light but were not blinded by the light, they were able to take Saul by the hand and lead him into Damascus.

## C. Paul's encounter with Ananias and his immersion Acts 22:12-16

*And a certain Ananias, a man who was devout by the standard of the Law, and well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, came to me, and standing near said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight!' And at that very time I looked up at him.*

*And he said, 'The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will, and to see the Righteous One, and to hear an utterance from His mouth. For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard.'*

*And now why do you delay? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.'*

Luke tells us (Acts 9:11) that Saul was taken to the home of a man named, Judas, located on Straight Street. Luke informs us *he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank,* before Ananias was sent to him and healed him of blindness.

As Paul had emphasized his Jewish orthodoxy, in the introduction to his speech, he also made it a point to emphasize that Ananias was a devout and Mosaic Law-abiding Jew, who had the respect of all of the Jews in Damascus.

The fact that Ananias' first act was to restore sight to Saul, was evidence to Saul that Ananias had some supernatural authority.

D. Paul's return to Jerusalem after his conversion and immersion Acts 22:17-21

*And it came about when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I fell into a trance, and I saw Him saying to me, 'Make haste, and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about Me.'*

*And I said, 'Lord, they themselves understand that in one synagogue after another I used to imprison and beat those who believed in Thee. And when the blood of Thy witness Stephen was being shed, I also was standing by approving, and watching out for the cloaks of those who were slaying him.'*

*And He said to me, 'Go! For I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'"*

As Paul continued his speech from the top of the stairs, he described his first visit to Jerusalem, following his conversion. This was the visit that Luke recorded in Acts 9:26-30.

When Paul first returned to Jerusalem after his conversion, he had hoped to accomplish that of which he wrote in Romans 10:1 *Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation.* (i.e., Israel Romans 9:31ff)

Luke's record of that first visit describes Paul's effort to bring Hellenistic Jews into Christ's Kingdom, *And he was talking and arguing with the Hellenistic Jews; but they were attempting to put him to death.* (Acts 9:29)

It was during this first visit, that the event occurred of which Paul now described in his speech from the stairs, *was praying in the temple, that I fell into a trance, and I saw Him saying to me, 'Make haste, and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about Me.'*

Paul's account is his first-person account. Luke's account is based on what Luke was told, therefore it is not surprising that Paul includes details which are absent in Luke's narrative.

The final line of what was said to Paul in the vision *For I will send you far away to the Gentiles,* is consistent with what the Lord said to Ananias, when he briefly argued with God about Saul, *Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake.*

E. Once again, Paul appealed to his Roman citizenship Acts 22:22-29

*And they listened to him up to this statement, and then they raised their voices and said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he should not be allowed to live!"*

*And as they were crying out and throwing off their cloaks and tossing dust into the air, the commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks, stating that he should be examined by scourging so that he might find out the reason why they were shouting against him that way.*

*And when they stretched him out with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who was standing by, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman and uncondemned?"*

*And when the centurion heard this, he went to the commander and told him, saying, "What are you about to do? For this man is a Roman."*

*And the commander came and said to him, "Tell me, are you a Roman?" And he said, "Yes."*

*And the commander answered, "I acquired this citizenship with a large sum of money." And Paul said, "But I was actually born a citizen."*

*Therefore those who were about to examine him immediately let go of him; and the commander also was afraid when he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had put him in chains.*

The crowd in the outer court, below Paul, listened patiently until he mentioned his mission to the Gentiles. When he began to describe that part of his testimony, all of the resentment of the Jewish audience exploded with abandoned rage.

Because Paul spoke to the crowd in Hebrew, the Roman tribune did not understand what he had said that aroused the crowd. Even so, it was evident that the crowd was bitterly opposed to Paul and whatever he had said, had angered them even more, as they even began taking off their cloaks and waving them as they shouted in extreme anger.

Therefore, the tribune decided to find out the truth for himself, by interrogating Paul under torture. He ordered Paul to be flogged. The Roman flog/scourge (Latin, *flagellum*), consisted of several leather straps, that were weighed with rough pieces of metal or bone, and attached to a stout wooden handle. If a person did not die under the scourge, he often was crippled for life.

Paul had been beaten with rods on three occasions (one of these in the hands of Roman lictors) and he had been sentenced five times to the lash inflicted by synagogue authorities.<sup>171</sup>

None of these previous lashings had the murderous quality of a *flagellum*.

Fortunately for Paul, being lashed by a *flagellum* was a punishment from which Roman citizens were legally exempt.<sup>172</sup> In the earlier days, the exemption was total. Under the empire, sometimes this punishment was inflicted as a penalty after a thorough investigation, resulting in a conviction. Even so, Roman citizens were always exempt except when convicted for some very serious crime and they always were exempt from this punishment as a “third degree” technique to obtain confessions.

This being true, when Paul asked the officer in charge of the punishment if it were legal to submit a Roman citizen to such punishment without his being convicted of a crime, the officer immediately halted the procedure and rushed to the tribune and told him what Paul had said.

In somewhat of a panic, the tribune quickly came to the place where Paul had been trussed up for the whipping and asked him if he were a Roman citizen. Paul probably didn't look like a Roman citizen after being set upon by the crowd in the temple and roughly dragged out of the outer court (Acts 21:30-31), as well as the rough treatment he had received thereafter. He must have been a battered and undignified spectacle, as he claimed to be a Roman citizen.

The tribune said that it cost him a very large sum of money to buy his citizenship. This bedraggled spectacle before him seemed to be claiming that the privilege of Roman citizenship must have become rather cheap, if such a low-life could claim Roman citizenship.

Technically, the price that he paid would have been a bribe given to an intermediary in the imperial secretariat or the provincial administration who would put his name on the list of candidates for enfranchisement. This form of bribery reached scandalous proportions under Claudius.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> II Corinthians 11:24-25

<sup>172</sup> By both the Valerian and Porcian Laws

<sup>173</sup> A.N. Sherman-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (New York, Oxford Press) 1963, Pages 154-155 Claudius' wife, Messalina Valeria, and her court favorites used this procedure as a means of enriching themselves.

Paul, the man whom the tribune was preparing to interrogate by flogging, was *born* a Roman citizen. This means that Paul's father was a citizen before him. How that citizenship was obtained by Paul's father or grandfather we have no way of knowing. However, such citizenship often was result of having given valuable services to a Roman general or administrator in the southeastern area of Asia Minor.

We can almost see the tribune shudder when he realized how close he had come to committing a serious infraction of Roman law. He had already begun the infraction by ordering Paul to be flogged, but, fortunately, the flogging had been aborted. He now was responsible to his own superiors for protecting this Roman citizen. Therefore had to set up a formal investigation as to what was the cause of the disturbance in the outer court of the temple.

### **Paul's appearance before the Sanhedrin Acts 22:30**

*But on the next day, wishing to know for certain why he had been accused by the Jews, he released him and ordered the chief priests and all the Council to assemble, and brought Paul down and set him before them.*

The emotional crowd in the outer court could not give any coherent reason for why it was so angered by Paul. The tribune knew that whatever the problem might be, it involved some sort of matter related to the Jewish religion or tradition.

The Roman administration of Judea was a military administration, and the commander of the Tower of Antonio was the chief representative of Rome in Jerusalem. He had the authority to order the Sanhedrin to meet.

When the Sanhedrin had come together and was in session, the tribune brought Paul down from the fortress to the council chamber on the western slope of the temple hill. Before any trial could begin, it had to be determined that an offense occurred for which a trial would be appropriate.

### **The verbal encounter between Paul and the High Priest Acts 23:1-5**

*And Paul, looking intently at the Council, said, "Brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day."*

*And the high priest Ananias commanded those standing beside him to strike him on the mouth.*

*Then Paul said to him, "God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! And do you sit to try me according to the Law, and in violation of the Law order me to be struck?"*

*But the bystanders said, "Do you revile God's high priest?"*

*And Paul said, "I was not aware, brethren, that he was high priest; for it is written, 'You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.'"*

### **EXCURSUS**

#### **Ananias<sup>174</sup>**

Ananias held the office of high priest for eleven or twelve years. He was appointed to the office by Herod of Chalis, the younger brother of Herod Agrippa. Ananias, in many ways, brought disrespect for the office. Josephus states that Ananias' servants would go to the threshing floors and seize the tithes that the threshers should have given to the common priests.<sup>175</sup> He did not hesitate to use violence and even assignation to forward his interests.

<sup>174</sup> Bruce, page 425

<sup>175</sup> *Antiquities*, 20, 206



The Talmud preserves a parody of Psalm 24:7 in which Ananias' greed was lampooned,

Lift up your heads, O ye gates;

That Yohananh<sup>176</sup> ben Narbai, the disciple of Pinqai,<sup>177</sup> may go in

And fill his belly with the divine sacrifices!

As soon as Paul was placed before the council, he began his defense.

To claim that one has lived his whole life in good conscience is a rather bold claim. Even so, this is not the only time that Paul made such a claim. Later, when he appeared before the Roman procurator, Felix, Paul said that it was his constant concern to always maintain a clear conscience in his relationship with God (Acts 24:16).

Even though Paul could say that he had lived his life according to his conscience, even when persecuting the church, he realized that the purest conscience could be wrong. He wrote to the Corinthians, *For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord.* (1 Corinthians 4:4)

Paul was not allowed to proceed in his defense. The high priest, Ananias, who was the president of the Sanhedrin, ordered Paul to be slapped for what he saw as insolence.

According to Jewish law, the rights of defendants were carefully protected. All persons charged were presumed to be innocent until proven guilty. The high priest, whose role was to administer the law, had violated the law by ordering those standing beside Paul to strike him on the mouth.

Such improper behavior from a member of the Sanhedrin brought an indignant retort from Paul. Here is another example of the apostles' temperament. His emotions exploded. We have seen evidence of Paul's emotions in other episodes.

- *But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work.*<sup>39</sup> *And there arose such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus.* (Acts 15:38-39). That these two men who had been through so much together could have such an emotional conflict is evidence of their humanity.
- Another instance of Paul's emotions is seen when he became annoyed at the demoniac maiden who followed them in Philippi proclaiming, *These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation. And she continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" And it came out at that very moment.* (Acts 16:17-18)

Paul's metaphor of a *whitewashed wall*, suggests a tottering wall whose precarious condition has been disguised by a generous coat of whitewash. Paul's words were more prophetic than he realized. As noted in the preceding EXCURSUS, Ananias was somewhat of an embarrassment to the Sanhedrin. As the years went by, Ananias' pro-Roman policies produced an intense

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<sup>176</sup>Yohanah has the same elements as are in the Hebrew form of the high priest's name, except in reverse order.

<sup>177</sup> Pinqai appears to be a satirical play on words – a variation on the name, Phineas (*pinhas*) and the noun, *pinka* (meat dish), alluding to Ananias' proverbial greed.

hostility against him on the part of the more militant Judean nationalists. When the war with Rome broke out in 66 AD, Ananias tried to hide in an aqueduct, from which he was dragged by the Jews and executed.

The bystanders were somewhat shocked by Paul's outburst. That was no way for anyone to speak to the person who occupied the office of high priest, regardless of who he might be, even someone like Ananias.<sup>178</sup>

Paul did not realize that Ananias was the high priest, he thought that he was only a member of the court. As soon as Paul was informed that Ananias was the high priest, he acknowledged that his language had been inappropriate.

### **Paul takes advantage of the Sadducees and Pharisees different beliefs concerning the resurrection Acts 23:6-10**

*But perceiving that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, Paul began crying out in the Council, "Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!" And as he said this, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and Sadducees; and the assembly was divided.*

*For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor an angel, nor a spirit; but the Pharisees acknowledge them all.*

*And there arose a great uproar; and some of the scribes of the Pharisaic party stood up and began to argue heatedly, saying, "We find nothing wrong with this man; suppose a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?"*

*And as a great dissension was developing, the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them and ordered the troops to go down and take him away from them by force, and bring him into the barracks.*

The high priest's interruption caused Paul to change his tactics. Instead of resuming his defense speech, which he had barely begun, he took stock of the constituency of the Sanhedrin. The majority were Sadducees, but there was a strong Pharisee minority.

He had addressed the Roman officer as a Roman citizen. Now, he addresses the Sanhedrin as a Pharisee. When he declared that he was on trial *for the hope and resurrection of the dead*, he hit on a doctrine that Pharisees considered basic and essential. The Sadducees, on the other hand, denied almost all spiritual realities. They were the equivalent of present-day humanistic liberals.

The atmosphere became so volatile that the tribune, fearful that this Roman citizen, for whom he was responsible would be violently torn apart, ordered the troops to retrieve Paul from the melee and bring him into the barracks in the tower.

### **The Lord Appears to Paul in a Night Vision Acts 23:11**

*But on the night immediately following, the Lord stood at his side and said, "Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also."*

After two grueling days, Paul might have felt somewhat rejected, dejected, and despondent. The Jerusalem Christians had started all of the trouble when they had urged Paul to go into the Temple and participate in the purification of the four men who were completing a vow. They

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<sup>178</sup> Note the similarity between this incident and the almost identical pattern displayed in John 18:19-22, involving an exchange between Jesus and the high priest.

probably felt that since they had started all of this, it was best to stay away and not risk causing any more trouble. Paul must have felt all alone.

This is not the first time that the risen Lord had appeared to Paul.

- Acts 18:9 The Lord appeared to Paul in the night and told him to be bold in the proclamation of the Gospel in Corinth.
- Acts 22:17-18 The Lord appeared to Paul shortly after he arrived in Jerusalem, and told Paul to quickly leave because the people would not accept his testimony.

The Lord's message this time was to cheer up. As he had borne witness in Jerusalem (no doubt referring to his speech to the crowd which he delivered while at the top of the stairs leading into the tower 21:37-40) he was going to be Christ's witness in Rome. Paul had expressed an intention to visit Rome,<sup>179</sup> now he knew that it was certain to be fulfilled.

### **A Plot to kill Paul Acts 23:12-15**

*And when it was day, the Jews formed a conspiracy and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul. And there were more than forty who formed this plot.*

*And they came to the chief priests and the elders, and said, "We have bound ourselves under a solemn oath to taste nothing until we have killed Paul.*

*Now, therefore, you and the Council notify the commander to bring him down to you, as though you were going to determine his case by a more thorough investigation; and we for our part are ready to slay him before he comes near the place."*

Disappointed that they had let Paul slip through their fingers, a group of Jewish zealots were determined to find a way to take Paul's life. They came up with a scheme that the thought would work. In all probability, the elders to whom they revealed their plan, probably did not include any Pharisees, because they had become Paul's defenders.

If they could get Paul out of the fortress while he was on the way to the assembly, even though he would be guarded by Roman soldiers, would attack and kill Paul. They hated Paul so much that they were willing to risk their lives in this effort.

### **The Plot Revealed Acts 23:16-22**

*But the son of Paul's sister heard of their ambush, and he came and entered the barracks and told Paul. And Paul called one of the centurions to him and said, "Lead this young man to the commander, for he has something to report to him."*

*So he took him and led him to the commander and said, "Paul the prisoner called me to him and asked me to lead this young man to you since he has something to tell you." And the commander took him by the hand and stepping aside, began to inquire of him privately, "What is it that you have to report to me?"*

*And he said, "The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down tomorrow to the Council, as though they were going to inquire somewhat more thoroughly about him. So do not listen to them, for more than forty of them are lying in wait for him who have bound themselves under a curse not to eat or drink until they slay him; and now they are ready and waiting for the promise from you."*

*Therefore the commander let the young man go, instructing him, "Tell no one that you have notified me of these things."*

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<sup>179</sup> Acts 19:21

This is one of the most intriguing accounts in Acts. The fact that Paul, a Jew, was born as a Roman citizen in Tarsus, indicates that his father was a Jew, who through some means obtained Roman citizenship. That is all that we know about Paul's family, until this episode.

Even here, we are left with more questions than answers, concerning Paul's biological family. Did his entire family live in Tarsus, or did some of them live in Jerusalem? Did this young man's mother live in Tarsus, and he had come to Jerusalem, as his uncle Paul had done, for training and schooling?

These are questions for which we have no certain answer.

We equally are in the dark about how Paul's nephew learned of the plot.

Therefore, we must be content with what we know: that Paul's sister's son, Paul's nephew, learned of the plot to kill the apostle and revealed the plot to his uncle Paul.

Because Paul was an unconvicted Roman citizen, he was kept in honorable custody in the Antonia fortress. He was allowed to receive visitors and when he needed something, he asked for it and, if reasonable, received it.

Therefore, when Paul's nephew visited him with the news of the plot, and Paul told one of the centurions to take his nephew to the tribune, it was done immediately.

The tribune, sensing that the information from the young man was of a sensitive nature, graciously took him by the hand and took him aside, where only the tribune could hear what was being said.

When he received the secret information, he told the young man to tell no one else, implying that he would take care of it.

### **The Tribune's response to the report of Paul's nephew Acts 23:23-30**

*And he called to him two of the centurions, and said, "Get two hundred soldiers ready by the third hour of the night to proceed to Caesarea, with seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen."*

*They were also to provide mounts to put Paul on and bring him safely to Felix the governor.*

*And he wrote a letter having this form: "Claudius Lysias, to the most excellent governor Felix, greetings.*

*When this man was arrested by the Jews and was about to be slain by them, I came upon them with the troops and rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman. And wanting to ascertain the charge for which they were accusing him, I brought him down to their Council; and I found him to be accused over questions about their Law, but under no accusation deserving death or imprisonment.*

*And when I was informed that there would be a plot against the man, I sent him to you at once, also instructing his accusers to bring charges against him before you."*

The tribune realized that Paul's life was not safe in Jerusalem. The Jewish zealots were determined, through one means or another, to kill the apostle. The tribune could risk the assassination of a Roman citizen that he had taken in custody.

Paul must be sent, at once, to Caesarea, under a sizeable military escort. Paul would be safer in Caesarea, in the custody of the governor.

It is also possible that tribune considered his own life to be at risk as long as he stood between Paul and the Jews.

He summoned two centurions and ordered them to assemble a very strong escort of heavy infantry, cavalry, and light armed troops to make the transfer to Caesarea. Horses or mules were provided for Paul, because the sixty miles from Jerusalem to Caesarea had to be covered as quickly as possible.

Luke could not have access to the tribune's letter to Felix and thus, produce it *verbatim*. However, the statement, *letter having this form*, indicates that through some means, he was able to gain a rather specific knowledge of the letter. How he did that, we do not know.

For the first time in the narrative, the tribune's name is given. His name, Lysias is a Greek name. As he had stated earlier to Paul, *I acquired this citizenship with a large sum of money*. When he became a Roman, he added the cognomen, *Claudius*. He possibly chose that cognomen because the emperor at the time was named, *Claudius*.

The term rendered in English translations as, *most excellent*, (Acts 23:26) is κράτιστος (*kratistos*). This term refers to an order of *knights*, which in Roman governmental hierarchy refers to those just below the rank of senator. Felix was not a member of the order of knights, but the title was bestowed on him, as it was bestowed on all governors of Judea.<sup>180</sup>

Lysias does not include in the letter his mistake in ordering a Roman citizen to be flogged. He also, falsely reports that the reason he rescued Paul from the mob was because he first learned that Paul was a Roman citizen.

So, he includes in the letter the reason for sending Paul to Felix is that there was a plot to kill him – but there is nothing in the letter to hint that Lysias had almost committed a crime against a Roman citizen. The letter pictures Lysias as a responsible Roman tribune, the commander of the Tower of Antonio who had rescued a Roman citizen from a Jewish mob.

### **Accompanied by a substantial military escort, Paul is taken to Caesarea Acts 23:31-35**

*So the soldiers, in accordance with their orders, took Paul and brought him by night to Antipatris.*

*But the next day, leaving the horsemen to go on with him, they returned to the barracks. And when these had come to Caesarea and delivered the letter to the governor, they also presented Paul to him.*

*And when he had read it, he asked from what province he was; and when he learned that he was from Cilicia, he said, "I will give you a hearing after your accusers arrive also," giving orders for him to be kept in Herod's Praetorium.*

Concerning the options available to the tribune, McGarvey comments,

“On receiving this information (concerning the plot), Lysias had at least three lines of policy between which to choose.

Had he been disposed to gratify the Jews, he might have permitted them to carry out their plot without probability of being known to his superiors as accessory to the murder.

Had he preferred to defy their power and display his own, he might have sent Paul down under guard so strong and so instructed that they would have slain the conspirators.

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<sup>180</sup> Bruce, page 29, footnote 3; Joseph Thayer, *Thayer's Greek Lexicon* (Peabody Mass. Hendrickson Publishers) 2000, page 359

Or, if he desired to protect Paul, and avoid offense to the Jews and bloodshed, he might send him away that night before their request had been laid before him.

It reflects credit on his military skill, and on his character as a man, that he chose the course which justice and prudence dictated.”<sup>181</sup>

Verse 23 states, *ready by the third hour of the night to proceed to Caesarea*. Based on the Roman timing, the third hour of the night would be 9 PM. The tribune chose the third option, sending Paul away before the Jews learned of his actions thus, avoiding a conflict with the Jews.

The first leg of the trip took the travelers to Antipatris, a distance of about 35 miles. The journey from Antipatris to Caesarea is about 30 miles.<sup>182</sup>

Since the troop left Jerusalem at 9 PM and arrived in Antipatris the next day, it clearly was a forced march for the infantry. The next day, since Paul was no longer in danger of being taken and killed by the Jews, the infantry was sent back their barracks in Jerusalem. The calvary, and Paul, also on a horse or mule, proceeded on the Caesarea.

Upon arriving at Caesarea, the commander of the calvary delivered the letter to Felix and handed Paul over to Felix’s custody.

It was important for Felix to know Paul’s home province. Had Paul been from one of the client states in the Syrian or Anatolian era, it would have been diplomatically wise to consult the ruler of that state. However, Paul came from a Roman province, and so it was appropriate for a Roman governor to proceed with the case, without any external consultation

Lysias had instructed Paul’s accusers to go to Caesarea and appear before Felix. Thus, the case would be handled in a truly responsible manner. They could present their case before the Roman authorities and appropriate action would be taken according to Roman law. Felix, accordingly, told Paul that he would be kept in custody until his accusers arrived and he then Felix would grant Paul’s accusers a full hearing of the case. Paul was to be detained in Herod’s praetorium.<sup>183</sup>

### **Paul accused before Felix Acts 24:1-9**

*And after five days the high priest Ananias came down with some elders, with a certain attorney named Tertullus; and they brought charges to the governor against Paul.*

*And after Paul had been summoned, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying to the governor, "Since we have through you attained much peace, and since by your providence reforms are being carried out for this nation, we acknowledge this in every way and everywhere, most excellent Felix, with all thankfulness.*

*But, that I may not weary you any further, I beg you to grant us, by your kindness, a brief hearing.*

*For we have found this man a real pest and a fellow who stirs up dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.*

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<sup>181</sup> McGarvey, page 230

<sup>182</sup> See ADDENDUM P for a map of the journey taken by the troop.

<sup>183</sup> Josephus describes Herod’s Praetorium as “Herod’s most costly palace..” Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book XV, chapter 9, section 6 (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Kregel Publications) 1981, pages 331-341

*And he even tried to desecrate the temple; and then we arrested him. And we wanted to judge him according to our own Law.*

*But Lysias the commander came along, and with much violence took him out of our hands, ordering his accusers to come before you. And by examining him yourself concerning all these matters, you will be able to ascertain the things of which we accuse him."*

*And the Jews also joined in the attack, asserting that these things were so.*

Five days after Paul's arrival, a deputation from Jerusalem, led by the high priest, showed to press charges against Paul

They had enlisted an attorney, no doubt paying a fee, to represent them in the court appearance. The name, Tertullus, was a common Roman name. Tertullus may have been a Hellenistic Jew. Because they were appearing in a Roman court, they needed a Roman attorney who would be familiar with proceedings in such a court.

The hearing began as it would in a modern court, with a speech from the attorney, presenting the accusation. This was followed by testimony of witnesses for the plaintiff.

Tertullus' speech began with great flattery of Felix. This style was the customary rhetorical pattern of the times. Many Judeans would challenge Tertullus' statement that Felix's administration had produced great peace. They might have applied the statement that Tacitus puts into the mouth of the Caledonian hero, Calgacus, *they make a desert and call it peace.*<sup>184</sup>

It also was customary to promise brevity, *But, that I may not weary you any further, I beg you to grant us, by your kindness, a brief hearing.* The promise was sometimes kept, and sometimes not.

After the flattering introduction, Tertullus began to bring the specific charges against Paul. He charged Paul with,

- *fellow who stirs up dissension among all the Jews throughout the world*
- *a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes*
- *he even tried to desecrate the Temple.*

Although Paul had no connection with the political messianism that stirred up trouble, even revolt, in many portions of the empire, the Romans would not have had the ability to discern between that movement and the fact that Paul's presence caused a disruption in almost every place he visited.<sup>185</sup>

The charge that Paul was a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes requires us, in honesty, to admit that there are several possibilities as to what this charge might imply.

The final charge was more specific and more serious. To prove that he had desecrated the Temple could not have been proven. However, the charge that he tried to desecrate the Temple and the Jewish authorities arrested him, is a convenient twisting of the facts. The Jewish mob that came against Paul was not an action of Temple police.

Tertullus seems to have attempted to score some points against Lysias, by claiming that he came and forcefully prevented the Jewish authorities from carrying out their responsibility to maintain law and order in the Temple courts.

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<sup>184</sup> Tacitus, *Agricola*, 30 (New York, D. Appleton & Company) 1882, page 61

<sup>185</sup> Acts 13:45, 50; 14:2-5; 17:5-9, 13; 18:6, 12-17; 19:9; 20:19

The representatives from the Sanhedrin obviously were pleased with Tertullus' speech and they quickly affirmed what he had said.

### **Paul's defense before Felix Acts 24:10-21**

*And when the governor had nodded for him to speak, Paul responded:*

*"Knowing that for many years you have been a judge to this nation, I cheerfully make my defense, since you can take note of the fact that no more than twelve days ago I went up to Jerusalem to worship.*

*And neither in the temple, nor in the synagogues, nor in the city itself did they find me carrying on a discussion with anyone or causing a riot.*

*Nor can they prove to you the charges of which they now accuse me.*

*But this I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law, and that is written in the Prophets; having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.*

*In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men.*

*Now after several years I came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings; in which they found me occupied in the temple, having been purified, without any crowd or uproar.*

*But there were certain Jews from Asia- who ought to have been present before you, and to make accusation, if they should have anything against me.*

*Or else let these men themselves tell what misdeed they found when I stood before the Council, other than for this one statement which I shouted out while standing among them, 'For the resurrection of the dead I am on trial before you today.'"*

When Felix nodded to Paul for him to speak, he also began with a compliment to the governor, but not full of flattery, as had been the case with Tertullus' introduction. Paul stated his confidence in Felix's ability to rightly judge the situation, since the governor had many years of experience with Judaism.

Jesus had instructed His disciples,

*Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; therefore be shrewd as serpents, and innocent as doves.*

*But beware of men; for they will deliver you up to the courts, and scourge you in their synagogues; and you shall even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.*

*But when they deliver you up, do not become anxious about how or what you will speak; for it shall be given you in that hour what you are to speak.*

*For it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you. (Matthew 10:16-20)<sup>186</sup>*

Thus, without any preparation, even though Paul had not been present when Jesus spoke these words, he modeled them and began his defense.

Paul presented an accurate description of his situation. He had been absent from Jerusalem for five years. When he arrived in Jerusalem, twelve days before being taken to Caesarea, he had

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<sup>186</sup> Also, Mark 13:11-13; Luke 21:12-15



come to Jerusalem to worship. Paul clearly stated that no one could prove that he had in any way, stirred up a crowd and caused a riot.

However, he had no hesitation stating that he worshipped the ancestral God of Israel, which, under Roman law, he was free to do. He stated that he served God according to *the Way*. *The Way* was the term which described Jesus' disciples, before they were known as Christians. The Jews called *the Way* a sect. Paul declared that even if he were a part of a sect, he served Israel's God and believed everything in the Law and the prophets. One special item in his belief, was the hope of a resurrection, which he implied was the hope of most Jews.

This hope of a resurrection would not have been the hope of those who oversaw the Sanhedrin, since they were Sadducees. They would view those who had this hope to be a part of an outdated conservative party. However, it is possible that some of the elders who accompanied the high priest may have been Pharisees, for whom this hope was an important doctrine.

Interestingly, this is the only time that Paul unambiguously professed a belief in a resurrection for both the righteous and the wicked.<sup>187</sup>

Paul's statement that he came to *bring alms* is the clearest mention in Acts of the offering which he had organized among the Gentile churches for their brethren in Judea. Reference to that offering is found in Paul's letters. Examples:

- *Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. On the first day of every week let each one of you put aside and save, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come. And when I arrive, whomever you may approve, I shall send them with letters to carry your gift to Jerusalem; and if it is fitting for me to go also, they will go with me. (1 Corinthians 16:1-4)*
- *but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints. For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, when I have finished this, and have put my seal on this fruit of theirs, I will go on by way of you to Spain. (Romans 15:25-28)*
- *and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we might go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised. They only asked us to remember the poor-- the very thing I also was eager to do. (Galatians 2:9-10 NAS)*

Paul had undergone the rights of purification, according to Jewish Law, without doing anything that could have caused a riot. The riot occurred when Asian Jews, mistakenly assumed that Paul had brought a Gentile into the Temple. However, none of these Asian Jews had come to Caesarea to present charges against Paul.

Bruce speculates that the Sanhedrin may have prohibited their being present, because their hollow charges against Paul would have been proven empty charges. A Roman judge would not look lightly on those who had wasted his time bringing unfounded charges.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> For statements that there will be a resurrection of the unrighteous as well as a resurrection of the righteous, see John 5:28-29; Revelation 20:12-15; Daniel 12:2

<sup>188</sup> Bruce, page 446

Paul closed his defense with the statement that the real issue was his declaration of his belief in the resurrection of the dead, which was not any sort of a crime.

### **Felix adjourns the proceedings Acts 24:22-23**

*But Felix, having a more exact knowledge about the Way, put them off, saying, "When Lysias the commander comes down, I will decide your case."*

*And he gave orders to the centurion for him to be kept in custody and yet have some freedom, and not to prevent any of his friends from ministering to him.*

Felix had been the governor in Judea for six years. His wife was a Jewess. As the husband of a Jewish woman, and in his role as governor of Judea, he had gained a knowledge of the religious parties of the Jews and the jealousies among them. Christianity was viewed by Romans as another religious party of the Jews. Therefore, he had an accurate understanding of *the Way*.

Williams interprets Felix's statement as indicating that,

"he was sympathetic toward the Christians – or at least had no desire to see them treated unjustly by the Jews – without wanting, on the other hand, to offend the Jews by setting Paul free."<sup>189</sup>

Be that as it may, Felix did not summon Lysias and Lysias did not show up. So, it seems that Felix's reply was a subterfuge, which, no doubt was apparent to the Sadducees.

Felix ordered that Paul's confinement be the least irksome that also would guarantee safe keeping.

The freedom with which Paul was able to receive friends, while confined, would have allowed him to have fraternal visits from Philip and other believers who lived in Caesarea.

### **Paul's interview with Felix Acts 24:24-27**

*But some days later, Felix arrived with Drusilla, his wife who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul, and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus.*

*And as he was discussing righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened and said, "Go away for the present, and when I find time, I will summon you."*

*At the same time too, he was hoping that money would be given him by Paul; therefore he also used to send for him quite often and converse with him.*

*But after two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus; and wishing to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul imprisoned.*

Since he had this outspoken Christian in his custody, Felix availed himself of the opportunity to improve his already, *more exact knowledge about the Way*.

Based on Felix's conduct, thus far in the narrative, we would assume that he was an honorable man. Such was not the case, as the following will reveal.

Drusilla was the youngest daughter of Herod Agrippa I, and at this time she was twenty years old. As a small girl, her father had betrothed her to the crown prince of Commagene in the

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<sup>189</sup> David J. Williams, *New International Biblical Commentary, Acts* (Peabody, Mass. Hendrickson Publishers) 1990, page 401

eastern Roman province of Asia.<sup>190</sup> When the crown prince refused to become a proselyte to Judaism, the betrothal was ended. Her brother, Herod Agrippa II, then gave her in marriage to the king of Emesa, a petty state in Syria. Felix saw her when she was only sixteen years old, and he became enamored with her beauty. With the help of a Cypriot magician, Felix persuaded her to leave her husband and become his wife. He promised her every “felicity.” She became Felix’s third wife and bore him a son, named Agrippa, who lost his life in the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 AD.

The Roman historian, Tacitus, describing the morals of Felix, wrote, “with every kind of cruelty and lust, he exercised the authority of a king with the temper of a slave.”<sup>191</sup> Felix and his brother, Pallas, had in fact been courtier slaves in the household of Agrippina, the mother of emperor Claudius. This was one of the most degraded households. Claudius lifted Felix from that role and sent him to be ruler of a province.

The statement, *Felix arrived*, could mean either that Felix, for some reason, had been out of the city, or that he and Drusilla came to an apartment in Herod’s praetorium where Paul was being kept.

Under the summons to speak, Paul was at liberty to choose the topic and direction of his discourse. He always made that choice on the basis of the spiritual condition and spiritual needs of his hearers.

Paul must have felt a bit of anxiety, when he launched into his sermon on the topic of righteousness, temperance, and judgement to come, with his audience being a man of such iniquity.

The terror that seized Felix in response to Paul’s anointed preaching could have been the beginning of a changed life, but lust and ambition smothered the kindling fires of conscience. Using the excuse of putting off Paul until a more convenient season, the interview ended.

We are not told how Paul’s dissertation affected Drusilla. Even so, she probably was no more composed than Felix.

Felix maintained the character that fit Tacitus’ description. Avarice reared its ugly head. Since Paul had unlimited liberty to receive visitors, Felix hoped to induce Paul to raise funds from his friends, that he, in turn, would give to Felix as a bribe to secure his release. This did not happen.

The removal of Felix was the result of an outbreak of civil strife between the Jewish and Gentile inhabitants of Caesarea. Felix intervened with troops in a manner that caused much bloodshed among the leaders of the Jews. Accusations of misgovernment were brought against him by the

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<sup>190</sup> Commagene was a region in northern ancient Syria (modern south-central Turkey) bounded by Cilicia on the west and Cappadocia on the north. Its eastern boundary was the Euphrates River. It was annexed by Rome in 17 AD, but briefly broke away from Rome and had an independent existence for 34 years (38-72 AD). Rome reestablished control over the area and incorporated Commagene into the Roman province of Syria.  
(<https://www.britannica.com/place/Commagene>)

<sup>191</sup> Tacitus, *History*, Book 5, paragraph. 9 “Antonius Felix, per omnem sevitian et libidinem, jus regium servili ingenio exercuit” <http://classics.mit.edu/Tacitus/histories.5.v.html>

Jews. Nero called him to Rome to answer for these charges and Felix barely escaped execution through the intervention of his brother, Pallas. Pallas had gained colossal wealth in his various roles in Roman government. Even after he left that role, he continued to have significant influence in Rome.

Felix was banished to Gaul, where he died. Drusilla clung to him through all of his failing fortunes.

The two years of Paul's imprisonment in Caesarea seem to have been the most inactive of his career. No epistles were written during this period, but he did have frequent visitors from fellow Christians in Caesarea.

### **Paul's trial before Festus Acts 25:1-12**

*Festus therefore, having arrived in the province, three days later went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea.*

*And the chief priests and the leading men of the Jews brought charges against Paul; and they were urging him, requesting a concession against Paul, that he might have him brought to Jerusalem (at the same time, setting an ambush to kill him on the way).*

*Festus then answered that Paul was being kept in custody at Caesarea and that he himself was about to leave shortly.*

*"Therefore," he said, "let the influential men among you go there with me, and if there is anything wrong about the man, let them prosecute him."*

*And after he had spent not more than eight or ten days among them, he went down to Caesarea; and on the next day he took his seat on the tribunal and ordered Paul to be brought.*

*And after he had arrived, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many and serious charges against him which they could not prove; while Paul said in his own defense,*

*"I have committed no offense either against the Law of the Jews or against the temple or against Caesar."*

*But Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, answered Paul and said, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me on these charges?"*

*But Paul said, "I am standing before Caesar's tribunal, where I ought to be tried. I have done no wrong to the Jews, as you also very well know. If then I am a wrongdoer, and have committed anything worthy of death, I do not refuse to die; but if none of those things is true of which these men accuse me, no one can hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar."*

*Then when Festus had conferred with his council, he answered, "You have appealed to Caesar, to Caesar you shall go."*

A new procurator/governor quite naturally would seek to make an acquaintance with the leading national authorities in his province. Therefore, three days after taking office, Festus went to Jerusalem to meet the chief priests and other influential members of the Sanhedrin.

The Jewish leaders lost no time in trying to take advantage of the new procurator's inexperience in the region. They asked him to send orders to Caesarea to bring Paul to Jerusalem. No doubt the zealous forty who had been frustrated in the earlier plot thought that they could carry out their original plans, during the trip from Caesarea to Jerusalem.

Festus did not accede to their request. He did not want to lengthen his stay in Jerusalem, and so he told the Jews that if a responsible deputation from the Jewish rulers went with him back to Caesarea, that could state their case against Paul, there.

After he spent a little more than a week in Jerusalem, Festus returned to Caesarea with a deputation from the Sanhedrin's accompanying him.

The next day after his arrival in Caesarea, Festus convened the tribunal and ordered Paul to be brought before him.

The Jewish delegation lodged serious charges against Paul, none of which they could prove. They could not provide any evidence to support their charges and no witnesses were forthcoming to validate the charges.

All that Paul needed to do was to deny their charges, categorically, one by one. Luke does not record the speeches given by the Jews in which they levelled the charges. Therefore, we must look at Paul's rebuttal to know what they were:

- a general charge of breaking Jewish law
- violating the sanctity of the temple.
- acting against the emperor's interests

No doubt Festus struggled to understand these accusations, which seemed to have been presented in general terms. However, having just recently come to the position of procurator, it would be politically advantageous to do something to gain the good will of the Sanhedrin, if that could be done without infringing on Roman justice.

Since Paul was Roman citizen, Roman justice by all means, be maintained. It would not make a difference in Roman law whether the case were head in Caesarea or Jerusalem. Desiring to find favor with his new subjects, Festus conceded to the request to relocate Paul's trial to Jerusalem.

Paul, of course, did not consider this a reasonable decision and so he played his trump card once again – *I appeal to Caesar.*

Festus quickly turned to his advisors and came back with the decision, *You have appealed to Caesar, to Caesar you shall go.*

### **Agrippa II and Bernice visit Festus Acts 25:13-22**

*Now when several days had elapsed, King Agrippa and Bernice arrived at Caesarea, and paid their respects to Festus.*

*And while they were spending many days there, Festus laid Paul's case before the king, saying, "There is a certain man left a prisoner by Felix; and when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews brought charges against him, asking for a sentence of condemnation upon him.*

*And I answered them that it is not the custom of the Romans to hand over any man before the accused meets his accusers face to face, and has an opportunity to make his defense against the charges.*

*And so after they had assembled here, I made no delay, but on the next day took my seat on the tribunal, and ordered the man to be brought.*

*And when the accusers stood up, they began bringing charges against him not of such crimes as I was expecting; but they simply had some points of disagreement with him about their own religion and about a certain dead man, Jesus, whom Paul asserted to be alive.*

*And being at a loss how to investigate such matters, I asked whether he was willing to go to Jerusalem and there stand trial on these matters.*

*But when Paul appealed to be held in custody for the Emperor's decision, I ordered him to be kept in custody until I send him to Caesar."*

*And Agrippa said to Festus, "I also would like to hear the man myself." "Tomorrow," he said, "you shall hear him."*

Festus faced a bit of a problem. When he sent the prisoner to Rome, it would be necessary to send a report of the crimes for which he is being charged and how the case had developed up to that point. No doubt he could consult records of the hearings before Felix, and perhaps Lysias' letter, but there was so much ambiguity in the situation. When he had listened to the prosecution and the defense, his perplexity only increased. Fortunately for him, a way out of this dilemma presented itself.

Herod Agrippa II was the ruler of a client kingdom to the northeast of Festus' province. He and his sister, Julia Bernice were children of Agrippa I, Bernice being the eldest daughter of Agrippa I. She had been married to her uncle, Chalcis, but he had died and she was living in the home of her brother, Agrippa II.

Agrippa II had quite a lot of power in Jewish religious affairs. He was given custodian of the Temple and was the one who appointed the high priest.

At a convenient time, during the visit, Festus brought up the subject of Paul. He recited the sequence of events that had taken place since Paul's being left a prisoner by Felix. He told him how he had planned to send Paul to Jerusalem, but Paul had appealed to Caesar and that was where things stood.

Agrippa's curiosity was aroused and he said that he would like to hear Paul's story. So, Festus arranged for the meeting.

The next day, when the meeting was held, it was not only attended by Agrippa and his sister, but also by members of the procurator's staff.

### **Paul appears before Agrippa Acts 25:23-27**

*And so, on the next day when Agrippa had come together with Bernice, amid great pomp, and had entered the auditorium accompanied by the commanders and the prominent men of the city, at the command of Festus, Paul was brought in.*

*And Festus said, "King Agrippa, and all you gentlemen here present with us, you behold this man about whom all the people of the Jews appealed to me, both at Jerusalem and here, loudly declaring that he ought not to live any longer.*

*But I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death; and since he himself appealed to the Emperor, I decided to send him.*

*Yet I have nothing definite about him to write to my lord. Therefore, I have brought him before you all and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after the investigation has taken place, I may have something to write.*

*For it seems absurd to me in sending a prisoner, not to indicate also the charges against him."*

There seems to be a bit of humor in Luke's account of the great ceremony with which they assembled.

When Paul was conducted into the chamber, he was introduced to Agrippa and the others. Festus informed them that he could not find any substance to the capital charges which his Jewish lodged Paul. He then told them what they already knew, that Paul had appealed to Caesar and so he had decided to send him to Caesar in Rome.

His hope was, that after King Agrippa heard Paul, that there would come forth some information that Festus could include in the letter that would accompany Paul to Rome. So, he handed the inquiry over to his royal visitor.

Agrippa had no authority to conduct a trial in Judea and so this was, in no sense a trial. It was merely and unofficial inquiry.

### **Paul accepts Agrippa's invitation to speak Acts 26:1-8**

*And Agrippa said to Paul, "You are permitted to speak for yourself."*

*Then Paul stretched out his hand and proceeded to make his defense:*

*"In regard to all the things of which I am accused by the Jews, I consider myself fortunate, King Agrippa, that I am about to make my defense before you today; especially because you are an expert in all customs and questions among the Jews; therefore I beg you to listen to me patiently. So then, all Jews know my manner of life from my youth up, which from the beginning was spent among my own nation and at Jerusalem;<sup>5</sup> since they have known about me for a long time previously, if they are willing to testify, that I lived as a Pharisee according to the strictest sect of our religion.*

*And now I am standing trial for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers; the promise to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly serve God night and day. And for this hope, O King, I am being accused by Jews.*

*Why is it considered incredible among you people if God does raise the dead?"*

Paul began by using his customary gesture, raising his hand. He began by congratulating himself on being fortunate to present his situation to a man of Agrippa's exalted status, especially since Agrippa was an expert on the subject of Jewish religious belief and practice.

Paul did not promise to be brief, but he did ask Agrippa to patiently listen to him while he presented his situation as fully as he could do so.

He described his early upbringing and how he had scrupulously kept the Pharisaical rules throughout his life. If any of those who knew him were willing to testify, they would verify these facts.

Paul stated his belief in the resurrection, which was one of the primary tenets of the Pharisees, was what he had resulted in the accusations by the Sadducee controlled Sanhedrin.

### **Paul described his persecuting zeal, and the heavenly vision Acts 26:9-18**

*"So then, I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them.*

*And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities.*

*While thus engaged as I was journeying to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, at midday, O King, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who were journeying with me.*

*And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'*

*And I said, 'Who art Thou, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.*

*But arise, and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; delivering you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you,*

*to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.'*

*Consequently, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance.*

*For this reason some Jews seized me in the temple and tried to put me to death.*

Paul understood the mind-set of his opponents, since he, himself, had strongly held the same attitude..

Even though Paul, as a Pharisee always had held strongly to the belief of the resurrection of the dead, he thought that the disciples of Jesus were charlatans when they proclaimed Jesus' resurrection. As a zealous young Pharisee, not only had gone from house to house, arresting Christians, but when judgment was being given against them, Paul said that he always voted for the death penalty.

His Pharisaical anger had driven him to pursue the arrest of Christians throughout the region, not just in Jerusalem.

Then, in his dissertation, he reported- the experience that has already been reported twice in Acts - the Damascus road encounter with Christ and Christ's calling him to become Christ's witness to both Jews and Gentiles.

In obedience to the heavenly vision, that is exactly what Paul did for the rest of his life – proclaim the message of Jesus to everyone at every opportunity. For this reason, the Jews accosted him in the Temple and tried to kill him. They would have done so, had it not been for the intervention of the Roman garrison.

### **Paul's conclusion Acts 26:22-23**

*"And so, having obtained help from God, I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place; that the Christ was to suffer, and that by reason of His resurrection from the dead He should be the first to proclaim light both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles."*

Paul concluded by emphasizing that the message that he proclaimed was thoroughly loyal to Israel's ancestral faith and completely loyal to the Jewish Scriptures. The announcing of light, both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles, was a part of the Servant described in Isaiah's prophecy,

*He says, "It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations, So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth." (Isaiah 49:6)*

Paul and Barnabas claimed these words as the setting in which they departed from Pisidian Antioch, *"For thus the Lord has commanded us, 'I have placed You as a light for the Gentiles, That You should bring salvation to the end of the earth.'" (Acts 13:47)*



Simeon earlier had echoed these words over the infant Messiah, when Joseph and Mary brought the baby Jesus to fulfill the Jewish rites that were performed on an infant,

*And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to carry out for Him the custom of the Law, then he took Him into his arms, and blessed God, and said, "Now Lord, Thou dost let Thy bond-servant depart In peace, according to Thy word;<sup>30</sup> For my eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, A light of revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Thy people Israel." (Luke 2:25-32)*

### **Exchange between Festus, Paul, and Agrippa Acts 26:24-29**

*And while Paul was saying this in his defense, Festus said in a loud voice, "Paul, you are out of your mind! Your great learning is driving you mad."*

*But Paul said, "I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I utter words of sober truth. For the king knows about these matters, and I speak to him also with confidence, since I am persuaded that none of these things escape his notice; for this has not been done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe the Prophets? I know that you do."*

*And Agrippa replied to Paul, "In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian."*

*And Paul said, "I would to God, that whether in a short or long time, not only you, but also all who hear me this day, might become such as I am, except for these chains."*

Festus could endure it no longer. It was obvious that Paul was a man of tremendous learning. Festus had never before heard anything like what Paul claimed and so he concluded that all of this knowledge and scholarship that was filling Paul's brain had caused some sort of brain fever.

What was sheer madness to Festus was truth and good sense to Paul. He appealed to Agrippa for aid. The events that Paul cited were well known and public knowledge. The ministry and death of Jesus were well known. Even pagan and Jewish historians reported such.<sup>192</sup> Not only that, His resurrection was verified by a host of witnesses.

To the Corinthians Paul had written

*and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.*

*After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep;*

*then He appeared to James,*

*then to all the apostles;*

*and last of all, as it were to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. (1 Corinthians 15:4-8)*

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<sup>192</sup> EXAMPLES: **The Dead Sea Scrolls** refer to the "teacher of righteousness to reveal to Israel the things in which they had gone astray: *The Qumran*, page 34.

**Flavius Josephus**, *the Antiquities*, Book 18, refers to Jesus twice and describes Him as living during the rule of Pontius Pilate. In Book 20, he describes the incident in which James *the brother of Jesus, the so-called Christ*.

**Tacitus**, in *The Annals*, recounts the crucifixion of one called Christus during Pilate's tenure.

Paul's contention was that anyone who was familiar with the prophets and believed them, and then compared their predictions with the historical facts concerning Jesus of Nazareth, had to believe that the prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus.

As a devout Jew, King Agrippa would have been an expert in the Jewish religion and he knew quite well the writings of the prophets and considered them to be authoritative. Paul called on Agrippa, who believed the prophets, to validate Paul's claims.

Agrippa seemed somewhat embarrassed and, whether in jest or with a serious reaction, commented, *In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian.*

Paul's reply was that not only Agrippa but that all who were in the meeting would become like Paul, except for the chains (no doubt gesturing toward his shackled wrist).

### **The agreement on Paul's innocence Acts 26:30-32**

*And the king arose and the governor and Bernice, and those who were sitting with them, and when they had drawn aside, they began talking to one another, saying, "This man is not doing anything worthy of death or imprisonment."*

*And Agrippa said to Festus, "This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar."*

The interview was over and as they withdrew and conferred, all agreed that, even if Paul were insane, he had not done anything to merit execution.

Since Paul had not done anything that violated Roman law. He could have been released, immediately, had he not appealed to Caesar. By making that appeal, Paul had placed himself in a new position and Roman law required that he travel to Rome and appear before Caesar.

### **The voyage to Rome begins by sailing from Caesarea to Myra Acts 27:1-5**

*And when it was decided that we should sail for Italy, they proceeded to deliver Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion of the Augustan cohort named Julius.*

*And embarking in an Adramyttian ship, which was about to sail to the regions along the coast of Asia, we put out to sea, accompanied by Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica.*

*And the next day we put in at Sidon; and Julius treated Paul with consideration and allowed him to go to his friends and receive care.*

*And from there we put out to sea and sailed under the shelter of Cyprus because the winds were contrary.*

*And when we had sailed through the sea along the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we landed at Myra in Lycia.*

Note that Luke begins another **we** narrative. Luke must have been in Caesarea with Paul, although that has not been previously indicated. How he spent his time, while in Caesarea, we can only speculate. It is doubtful that he would have been in the audience during the trials, since he had no standing that would have allowed his presence.

The centurion, Julius, was of the Augustinian cohort. This was a title of honor bestowed in certain Roman troops.

Aristarchus is not mentioned again in this narrative. Nothing is known about him except that he was with Paul in prison.

*Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings; and also Barnabas' cousin Mark (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him); (Colossians 4:10)*

*Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow workers. (Philemon 1:23-24)*

Luke does not identify the other prisoners, but they, along with Paul, were on their way to Rome for some adjudication.

As has been true in Luke's description of other voyages, he gives details of the geographical elements in the trip.

The first stop was at Sidon. Here Paul received the first of many kindnesses that Julius demonstrated toward Paul. There was a Christian community at Sidon and the centurion allowed Paul (no doubt accompanied by a soldier) to go ashore and visit the members of this community (for that must be the understanding of "friends."). As an expression of the love that exists among believers, the Christians at Sidon ministered to Paul.

When they set out from Sidon and sailed east & north of Cyprus (the lee side of the island) because the summer winds in this region usually are moving in a westerly direction. The ship worked its way slowly to the west and they finally arrived at Andrake, which was the seaport for Myra (3 ½ miles southwest of Myra).

This was one of the chief ports of the imperial grain service.

#### **After changing ships at Myra, they proceed toward Crete Acts 27:6-8**

*And there the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing for Italy, and he put us aboard it. And when we had sailed slowly for a good many days, and with difficulty had arrived off Cnidus, since the wind did not permit us to go farther, we sailed under the shelter of Crete, off Salmone; and with difficulty sailing past it we came to a certain place called Fair Havens, near which was the city of Lasea*

There was a grain ship in port that belonged to the grain fleet that sailed between Egypt and Rome. At that time, Egypt was the chief granary of Rome, and the stability of Rome depended on Egypt's grain.

The opposing winds made this leg of the journey tedious and slow. Finally, they came to the region known as Fair Havens, near Lasea. This port was not a good port in which dock the vessel during winter.

#### **Paul's warning is unheeded and his prediction is fulfilled Acts 27:9-20**

*And when considerable time had passed and the voyage was now dangerous, since even the fast was already over, Paul began to admonish them, and said to them, "Men, I perceive that the voyage will certainly be attended with damage and great loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives."*

*But the centurion was more persuaded by the pilot and the captain of the ship, than by what was being said by Paul.*

*And because the harbor was not suitable for wintering, the majority reached a decision to put out to sea from there, if somehow they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete, facing southwest and northwest, and spend the winter there.*

*And when a moderate south wind came up, supposing that they had gained their purpose, they weighed anchor and began sailing along Crete, close inshore.*

*But before very long there rushed down from the land a violent wind, called Euraquilo; and when the ship was caught in it, and could not face the wind, we gave way to it, and let ourselves be driven along.*

*And running under the shelter of a small island called Claudia, we were scarcely able to get the ship's boat under control.*

*And after they had hoisted it up, they used supporting cables in undergirding the ship; and fearing that they might run aground on the shallows of Syrtis, they let down the sea anchor, and so let themselves be driven along.*

*The next day as we were being violently storm-tossed, they began to jettison the cargo; and on the third day they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands.*

*And since neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small storm was assailing us, from then on all hope of our being saved was gradually abandoned.*

Paul, it seems, had a prophetic word, concerning the future. Winter was upon them, and sailing was growing dangerous. Even so, the pilot and captain, as well as the crew, chose to leave Fair Havens and press forward to the more commodious harbor of Phoenix.

Shortly the change of wind for which they had been waiting occurred. The gentle south wind promised to take them to Phoenix without any difficulty, but such was not to be.

As they sailed forth, suddenly the wind changed and it became a violent northerly wind. The sailors recognized this as an ancient enemy and they had a name for it, *Euraquilo*.

Any chance of making Phoenix was now out of the question. They had little choice but let themselves be driven by the violent wind. Twenty-three miles away on the leeward island of Claudia they had a brief respite.

They quickly took advantage of this situation. First, they hauled the ship's dinghy on board. This small boat normally was stored on the stern and towed behind the ship. In bad weather, the dinghy was taken on board so that it would not become filled with water. However, the violent northeast wind made their task quite difficult.

Note that Luke was involved in getting the dinghy on board -*we were scarcely able to get the ship's boat under control*. Everyone on board must have pitched in to do all that they could to survive.

The next thing to do was to undergird the ship. Pliny the elder wrote, concerning such a situation, 'The chief plague of sailors, is breaking up not only the spars, but the hull itself.'<sup>193</sup>

As a safety measure, ancient vessels were provided with cables already fitted for bracing the hulls to enable them to resist destructive winds.<sup>194</sup>

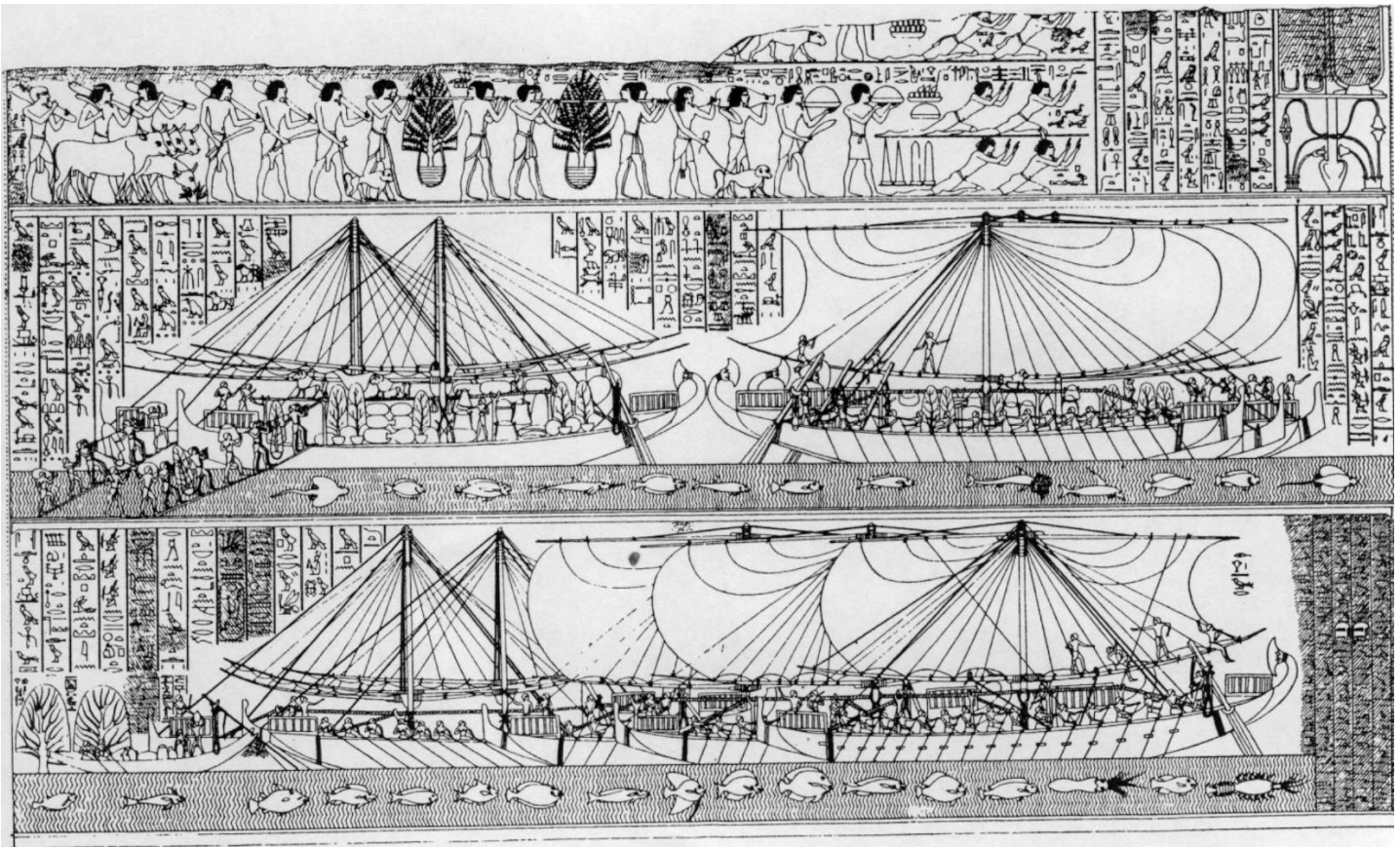
This undergirding, called, "frapping," is illustrated in this drawing of the Egyptian sailors frapping a vessel during Egyptian Queen Hatshepsut's historic visit to Punt (present day Somalia)<sup>195</sup>.

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<sup>193</sup> Pliny, *Natural History*, Volume II, 132

<sup>194</sup> Bruce, page 485-486

<sup>195</sup> James Smith, *The Voyage & Shipwreck of St. Paul* (Eugene, Oregon, Wipf & Stock Pub.) 2001 page 114



Next, they let down the sea anchor. This was a floating, or drift anchor. It was dragged behind the ship, secured by a cable of suitable length, and it would offer resistance each time the ship would plunge down from the crest of a wave.

When they had done all that they could do, the ship was driven at about 1 ½ miles an hour toward the northwest. The next day, since there was no letup in the storm and fearing for the ability of the ship to survive, they sought to lighten the load by jettisoning most of their cargo. The ship's owner depended on the delivery of the grain and so this truly was a desperate act.

The next day, a more drastic measure was undertaken. All spare gear on board was tossed overboard.

Eleven dreary days and nights followed. The storm blotted out the stars and moon at night and the sun by day.

The ship was leaking badly and the only move left would have been to determine how to get the ship to shallow water.

**Paul's reminder of his prophetic word and then a word of encouragement Acts 27:21-26**

*And when they had gone a long time without food, then Paul stood up in their midst and said, "Men, you ought to have followed my advice and not to have set sail from Crete, and incurred this damage and loss.*

*And yet now I urge you to keep up your courage, for there shall be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship.*

*For this very night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood before me, saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and behold, God has granted you all those who are sailing with you.'*

*Therefore, keep up your courage, men, for I believe God, that it will turn out exactly as I have been told. But we must run aground on a certain island."*

In the midst of all of this tension, they probably had little interest in food. Also, it would have been difficult to prepare food, and no doubt, some of their supplies had been destroyed by sea water.

Paul, being human, could not resist the temptation to say to those who had resisted his advice at Fair Havens, "I told you so!"

Then, he proceeded to tell them what they needed most, a word of encouragement and hope. This was not just the power of positive thinking, or wishful thinking. Paul had been visited by an angel and the angel told him that he and all onboard the ship would survive. However, the ship would not survive.

This was not the first time that Paul had been in such a situation. It was the fourth time that he had been in a shipwreck. Paul wrote II Corinthians prior to this time. In II Corinthians 11:25 Paul wrote,

*Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep.*

Scripture does not contain any record of the other two times that he was shipwrecked. On one of these occasions in which he spent a *day and a night in the deep*, he probably survived by holding on to a spar from the wreck.

The assurance of the angel was the same that Paul had received two years earlier, when his life was threatened during the riot in the Jerusalem Temple. On that occasion, the Lord had come to him in a vision and assured him that he would bear witness to Christ in Rome (Acts 23:11). Now, the same assurance was given.

So Paul, in essence saying, "You didn't listen to me the first time, but now that you see what I warned you about has happened, please listen to me this time. *It will turn out exactly as I have been told.*"

### **They approach land Acts 27:27-32**

*But when the fourteenth night had come, as we were being driven about in the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors began to surmise that they were approaching some land.*

*And they took soundings and found it to be twenty fathoms; and a little farther on they took another sounding and found it to be fifteen fathoms. And fearing that we might run aground somewhere on the rocks, they cast four anchors from the stern and wished for daybreak.*

*And as the sailors were trying to escape from the ship and had let down the ship's boat into the sea, on the pretense of intending to lay out anchors from the bow, Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, "Unless these men remain in the ship, you yourselves cannot be saved." Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the ship's boat, and let it fall away.*

The *Adriatic Sea* is the central Mediterranean Sea. The sailors could hear the sound of breakers, so they knew that they were nearing land and the soundings they took verified that they were approaching increasingly shallow water.

They dropped four anchors from the stern, thus causing the ship to swing around so that the bow faced the shore. The ship then was in a position to be beached at daybreak. At daybreak, they could cut the anchor cables and be driven onto the beach.

The sailors, seeking to save themselves, regardless of what happened to everyone else on board, put the dinghy into the water on the pretense of securing anchors on the bow.

Paul turned to the soldiers who were escorting him to Rome, and told them that unless everyone stayed on board, those presently on board would not be saved. That is an interesting declaration, because no such word from God to Paul is recorded.

However, because Paul had been right when he warned them previously, they chose to listen to him this time, and they cut the ropes that held the boat and it fell into the sea.

### **Paul encouraged everyone to eat before the break of day Acts 27:33-38**

*And until the day was about to dawn, Paul was encouraging them all to take some food, saying, "Today is the fourteenth day that you have been constantly watching and going without eating, having taken nothing.*

*Therefore, I encourage you to take some food, for this is for your preservation; for not a hair from the head of any of you shall perish."*

*And having said this, he took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of all; and he broke it and began to eat.*

*And all of them were encouraged, and they themselves also took food.*

*And all of us in the ship were two hundred and seventy-six persons.*

*And when they had eaten enough, they began to lighten the ship by throwing out the wheat into the sea.*

For the first time, Luke informs us of the number of those who were on the ship – 276 people.

All on board the ship had been so distraught and tense, that they had not stopped to eat. Even though some of their supplies probably had been ruined by seawater, some had survived. Prior to this time, they really had not been in a position to prepare food and relax enough to eat.

Because of what lay ahead, each person was going to need the energy and strength to survive. So, Paul set the example, thanked God that some food had survived, and then broke bread and began to eat. We might have many questions concerning the details of this episode, such as what was the *bread*, and was there anything to eat, other than bread? We must abandon those questions and accept the fact that food of some sort was available for everyone onboard.

Part, if not most of the wheat had been cast overboard earlier (verse 18), but some was left onboard, possibly as ballast and for food.

In the present situation there was no need to keep anything on board and so the remainder of the wheat was tossed overboard.

### **The shipwreck and the 276 occupants of the vessel reach shore Acts 27:39-44**

*And when day came, they could not recognize the land; but they did observe a certain bay with a beach, and they resolved to drive the ship onto it if they could.*

*And casting off the anchors, they left them in the sea while at the same time they were loosening the ropes of the rudders, and hoisting the foresail to the wind, they were heading for the beach.*

*But striking a reef where two seas met, they ran the vessel aground; and the prow stuck fast and remained immovable, but the stern began to be broken up by the force of the waves.*

*And the soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, that none of them should swim away and escape; but the centurion, wanting to bring Paul safely through, kept them from their intention, and commanded that those who could swim should jump overboard first and get to land, and the rest should follow, some on planks, and others on various things from the ship. And thus it happened that they all were brought safely to land.*

Although the sailors had traveled in this region before, they were unfamiliar with the particular beach that was before them. It was far from the Bay of Valletta with which they would have been familiar.

The beach that is before them is bounded by a rocky reef with a creek running through the beach and emptying into the sea. Today, this location is called the *Bay of St. Paul*.

They removed all restraints to the vessel, and hoisted a sail so that the wind would drive them onto the beach. However, before reaching the beach, the ship struck the reef, and the vessel could not proceed any further.

The violent sea began to cause the ship to break apart. It was time to abandon ship.

According to the military code of Rome, soldiers were responsible for the safekeeping of any prisoners in their charge. We do not know now many prisoners were on board the vessel but realizing that in this confusion some of the prisoners could escape, they decided that in order to prevent any prisoners escaping, they should slaughter the prisoners.

The centurion, taking seriously his responsibility to transport Paul to Rome, ordered them to abandon their plans.

He then ordered those who could swim, to do so, and those who could not swim, to get into the water and by latching onto a piece that had broken off the ship, to float to shore.

By doing as the centurion ordered, everyone on board reached the beach.

The angelic assurance given to Paul in their darkest hour, had been fulfilled to the letter. The ship and the cargo had been lost, but everyone on board had reached the shore safely..

### **Welcome to Melita! Acts 28:1-10**

*And when they had been brought safely through, then we found out that the island was called Melita.*

*And the natives showed us extraordinary kindness; for because of the rain that had set in and because of the cold, they kindled a fire and received us all.*

*But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat, and fastened on his hand.*

*And when the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they began saying to one another, "Undoubtedly this man is a murderer, and though he has been saved from the sea, justice has not allowed him to live."*

*However he shook the creature off into the fire and suffered no harm. But they were expecting that he was about to swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But after they had waited a long time and had seen nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and began to say that he was a god.*

*Now in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to the leading man of the island, named Publius, who welcomed us and entertained us courteously three days.*



*And it came about that the father of Publius was lying in bed afflicted with recurrent fever and dysentery; and Paul went in to see him and after he had prayed, he laid his hands on him and healed him.*

*And after this had happened, the rest of the people on the island who had diseases were coming to him and getting cured.*

*And they also honored us with many marks of respect; and when we were setting sail, they supplied us with all we needed.*

In our era, Melita is called, *Malta*. For that reason, some modern English versions render, Melita, as, *Malta* (NIV, NKJ, NAB, NAS).

The native Maltese were of Phoenician extraction and their language was a Phoenician dialect. Since they did not speak Latin or Greek, Romans and Greeks called them, *barbarians*. That came from their description of non-Latin and non-Greek speaking peoples whom they said muttered something like, *bar, bar, bar*, when they spoke.

If they were barbarians in speech, they displayed amazing, civilized behavior toward the survivors of the shipwreck. It was a cold, rainy morning. The 276 survivors would have come ashore shivering. How good it was to see the fire that the Maltese had kindled for them.

Paul, who had shown himself to be a practical and helpful person on board the ship, continued to display that character. Every fire needs new fuel to keep burning and so Paul started to grab some brushwood to keep the fire going.

When he had gathered one bundle and put it on the fire, a poisonous serpent that was in the bundle fastened its fangs into Paul's hand. The Greek text identifies this serpent as a *viper*. Vipers do not coil and strike their victim. Thus, the description of the serpent's behavior fits the description of a viper..

Paul quickly held the serpent over the fire and shook it off into the flames.

The Maltese saw this as a sign that Paul was a murderer and although he had survived the shipwreck, the fates were not going to let him continue to survive. They expected Paul to begin to swell up, and drop dead, as a result of the venom that had entered his body. This did not happen.

Observing the fact that Paul suffered no consequences of the serpent's attack, they decided that he was some sort of a god. At no point in the narrative are we told that they changed their mind.

Furthermore, there is no report in Luke's narrative of Paul's responding to their calling him a god, as there was at Lystra, when the people responded to the healing of the cripple by declaring that Paul and Barnabas were Gods. In that episode, Paul declared,

*Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you, and preach the gospel to you in order that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them. (Acts 14:15)*

The hospitality of the Maltese continued as the leading man of the island, Publius, took in the travelers. Since there were 276 survivors, Publius' estate must have been quite large, in order to accommodate such a sizeable group for three days.

Paul's miraculous escaping death from the viper, was followed by a host of miracles, beginning with the healing of Publius' father.

The amazing hospitality of the Maltese was displayed when the group departed, by supplying their needs when they set sail from the island.

### **The last lap, and so we came to Rome Acts 28:11-15**

*And at the end of three months we set sail on an Alexandrian ship which had wintered at the island, and which had the Twin Brothers for its figurehead.*

*And after we put in at Syracuse, we stayed there for three days.*

*And from there we sailed around and arrived at Rhegium, and a day later a south wind sprang up, and on the second day we came to Puteoli.*

*There we found some brethren, and were invited to stay with them for seven days; and thus we came to Rome.*

*And the brethren, when they heard about us, came from there as far as the Market of Appius and Three Inns to meet us; and when Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage.*

See ADDENDUM Q for the details of this trip.

The three months that they spent in Melita were the winter months, when the seas were closed for navigation. When winter ended and it was time to continue the journey, they boarded a ship from Alexandria. Since Alexandria was the northernmost port of Egypt, this probably was another part of the Egyptian grain fleet.

Ships often took their names from the figurehead that was perched on the bow. The Twin Brothers were Castor and Pollux. These were considered to be the patrons of navigation and were the objects of devotion of sailors of that era.

Setting sail from Melita and probably after one day's sailing, reached Syracuse, in southeast coast of Sicily. Syracuse, with its two ports, was the most important city in Sicily. The three days that they spent at Syracuse, probably was caused by the fact that the southerly wind that had brought them there had abated and they were waiting for a more favorable wind to resume.

When they returned to the sea, they made their way to Rhegium, located in the toe of Italy. After only one day in port, they were able to continue their journey because of a strong south wind. They crossed the strait of Rhegium, to the west side and then sailed to Puteoli.

Puteoli was and still is the most sheltered part of the Bay of Naples. It was a center of the Alexandrian grain shipping.

They found a church at Puteoli, and they invited the travelers to spend some time with them. It is not surprising that there would be a church in a city as important as Puteoli. There also was a very large Jewish community at Puteoli. The Jewish community in that city was the second largest settlement of Jews in Italy – being exceeded only by the Jewish community in Rome.

The travelers tarried for one week, then, on foot, proceeded on to Rome, traveling north on the famous Appian Way.

Someone from Puteoli must have gone to Rome and told the believers in Rome about Paul's arrival, because as the company was traveling north, a sizeable group of believers from the surrounding area met them on the road.

The contingency of Christians from Rome who traveled south to meet Paul, are clear evidence of their being a church in Rome prior to Paul's visit.

Some from Rome walked forty-three miles to intercept the company at the Market of Appius.

As the company proceeded north toward Rome, they arrived at Three Taverns, a halting place thirty-three miles south of Rome. Another group from Rome arrived at Three Taverns to escort Paul the for the rest of the Journey into the city.

So, Paul and Luke had a large contingency of believers walking with them, in addition to the military escort and the other prisoners. It must have been quite a scene, when they entered Rome.

Three years earlier, he had written to the Roman Christians that he hoped to visit them.<sup>196</sup> Now his prayers had been answered, but not in the manner in which he had anticipated. He was arriving in Rome as a prisoner, rather than as a traveling evangelist.

**Upon arrival in Rome, Paul is kept under house arrest and guarded by a soldier, but he was free to receive visitors Acts 28:16-28**

*And when we entered Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier who was guarding him.*

*And it happened that after three days he called together those who were the leading men of the Jews, and when they had come together, he began saying to them, "Brethren, though I had done nothing against our people, or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. And when they had examined me, they were willing to release me because there was no ground for putting me to death.*

*But when the Jews objected, I was forced to appeal to Caesar; not that I had any accusation against my nation.*

*For this reason therefore, I requested to see you and to speak with you, for I am wearing this chain for the sake of the hope of Israel."*

*And they said to him, "We have neither received letters from Judea concerning you, nor have any of the brethren come here and reported or spoken anything bad about you. But we desire to hear from you what your views are; for concerning this sect, it is known to us that it is spoken against everywhere."*

*And when they had set a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in large numbers; and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God, and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening.*

*And some were being persuaded by the things spoken, but others would not believe. And when they did not agree with one another, they began leaving after Paul had spoken one parting word, "The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers, saying, 'Go to this people and say, "You will keep on hearing, but will not understand; And you will keep on seeing, but will not perceive.*

*For the heart of this people has become dull, and with their ears they scarcely hear, And they have closed their eyes; Lest they should see with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart and return, And I should heal them."*

*Let it be known to you therefore, that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will also listen."*

They entered Rome by the entrance known as the Porta Capena. After describing their arrival, Luke does not use the pronoun, **we**, in the rest of the account. Since all evidence points to the

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<sup>196</sup> Romans 1:9-13; 15:22-32

conclusion that Paul wrote the letters to the Philippians and the Colossians while in prison, then we know that Luke remained in Rome, since in those letters Luke sends them greetings.

- *Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow workers.* (Philemon 1:23-24)
- *Luke, the beloved physician, sends you his greetings, and also Demas.* (Colossians 4:14)

Paul enjoyed a measure of personal liberty, although he was lightly chained to a soldier. The soldier was relieved from that duty by a different soldier every four hours. The result was, Paul became a topic of conversation among the praetorian guard.

*Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else,* (Philippians 1:12-13)

Also, even members of Caesar's household staff encountered the Gospel through Paul's incarceration.

*All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household.* (Philippians 4:22)

In keeping with his consistent procedure – *to the Jews first* – Paul took steps as soon as he could to make contact with the Jewish community. He was not able to visit the synagogues of Rome, as he had done in other places, so he sent word to the leaders of the Jewish community inviting them to visit him.

Paul briefly introduced himself to the Jewish leaders and summarized the events that had brought him to Rome.

Paul made it clear, as he addressed these Jews, that he was speaking in his own defense, and that he had nothing bad to say about his own nation or its leaders. His appeal to Caesar was made solely to have his innocence established.

Even so, it was his devotion to Israel's ancestral hope that had cost him his freedom and brought him to Rome.

The Jewish leaders' answer to Paul is a model of diplomacy. That they had not received any communication from Jerusalem is somewhat surprising, since the Jerusalem-Rome connection was strong. Perhaps the winter travel restrictions had caused a delay in whatever message they might have sent. Perhaps a letter from Jerusalem one was on the way, but had not reached Rome.

As to the Christianity which Paul professed, they had some hearsay information and what they had heard about Christianity was that it had a bad reputation. Because there was a flourishing church in Rome, these Jewish leaders must have had some contact with Christians, but they seemed to have judged it wise to not commit themselves on the subject, until they heard from Paul's account of himself and his beliefs.

A day was fixed for a thoroughgoing discussion and on that appointed day, many of the Jewish leaders came to Paul's residence to hear what he had to say.

He spoke to them about the kingdom of God and spent the entire day seeking to convince them from the Law and the prophets that Jesus had proven to be the fulfillment of the hope found in those sacred Scriptures.

As had been true in previous situations, some were persuaded by Paul's presentation and some were not. There must have been some sort of debate among them, since Luke wrote that there was a disagreement.

Because they could not agree at this time, they began to prepare to leave. Before they left, Paul recited Isaiah 6:9-10, in which Isaiah on his call to prophetic ministry is warned not to expect a favorable response from the people to whom he was sent.

The Gospels, in Matthew 13:13; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; John 12:39-40, cite Jesus' applying this passage to the hearers in his ministry.

### **The Gospel Advances without hindrance in Rome Acts 28:30-31**

*And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters, and was welcoming all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.*

Paul stayed in Rome, paying rent on the dwelling in which he stayed. We might assume that members of the Roman Church provided those funds.

The schedule of the courts in Rome was quite full, since matters from all over the empire ended up in the Roman courts. This explains why Paul waited two years before getting a hearing from Caesar.

During this time, when visitors of one sort or another would show up in his rented quarters, Paul was able to preach the Gospel. The authorities must have known what Paul was doing, but they put no obstacle in his way.

For reasons that we do not know, Luke ended the account before Paul was able to find a place on the Roman court docket and appear before Caesar.

THUS ENDS LUKE'S ACCOUNT OF THE FIRST YEARS OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST.

For a study of Paul's life after the close of Acts, see ADDENDUM A

# ADDENDUM A

## PAUL'S LIFE, FOLLOWING THE EVENTS RECORDED IN ACTS

### Evidence that Paul was acquitted and released

The general consensus is that Paul was released and continued to travel for approximately two years, before being arrested a second time and then, according to tradition, being executed. If this is correct, the epistles to Timothy and Titus were written in this interim.

The Acts narrative does not present the possibility for some of the events and journeys described in Paul's epistles to Timothy and Titus. Here are some snippets that suggest a ministry in the region around the Aegean Sea, none of which would fit into the *Acts* narrative.

- *As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus, in order that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines, (I Timothy 1:3)*
- *I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you (in Ephesus) before long;<sup>15</sup> but in case I am delayed, I write so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth. (I Timothy 3:14-15)*
- *For this reason, I left you in Crete, that you might set in order what remains, and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, (Titus 1:5)*
- *When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, make every effort to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. (Titus 3:12)*
- *When you come bring the cloak which I left at Troas with Carpus, and the books, especially the parchments. (II Timothy 4:13)*
- *Erastus remained at Corinth, but Trophimus I left sick at Miletus. (II Timothy 4:20)*

Clement of Rome, writing to the Corinthians in the mid-90s, states in the fifth chapter of the epistle,

“After preaching both in the east and west, he gained the illustrious reputation due to his faith, having taught righteousness to the whole world, and come to the extreme limit of the west, and suffered martyrdom under the prefects.”<sup>197</sup>

NOTE: For a description of the Epistle of Clement, see ADDENDUM B

To a first century Roman, the *extreme limit of the west* was Spain. Paul had expressed a desire to travel to Spain (Romans 15:24), but he did not accomplish that before his arrest and imprisonment.

The apocryphal *Acts of Peter*, a gnostic work, written about 180 AD, describes in some detail Paul's departure from the Roman harbor of Ostia, to travel to Spain.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1010.htm>

<sup>198</sup> Otto F. A. Meinardus, “Paul's Missionary Journey to Spain: Tradition and Folklore/” *The Biblical Archaeologist*, Volume 41, No. 2 (June 1978) pp. 61-63. Several Spanish legends, as early as the 8<sup>th</sup> Century describe Paul's mission to Catalonia (northeast Spain). John Chrysostom (398 AD) in his sermon on II Timothy 4:20, states that “Paul after his residence in Rome, departed to Spain.

Jerome, in 392 AD, stated that at the end of his first imprisonment, "Paul was dismissed by Nero, that the Gospel of Christ might be preached in the west."<sup>199</sup>

The most comprehensive early history of the Church was written by Eusebius of Caesarea, c.325 AD. In Book 2, Chapter 22 of *Ecclesiastical History*, Eusebius wrote,

"Festus was sent by Nero to be Felix's successor. Under him Paul, having made his defense, was sent bound to Rome. Aristarchus was with him, whom he also somewhere in his epistles quite naturally calls his fellow-prisoner. And Luke, who wrote the Acts of the Apostles, brought his history to a close at this point, after stating that Paul spent two whole years at Rome as a prisoner at large, and preached the word of God without restraint. Thus ,after he had made his defense it is said that the apostle was sent again upon the ministry of preaching, and that upon coming to the same city a second time he suffered martyrdom." <sup>200</sup>

In support of his conclusions, Eusebius cites some of the same evidence we noted in the epistles to Timothy, and also noting that Paul's trial occurred before the time when Nero became a persecutor of Christians. On this second point, Eusebius commented,

"It is probable indeed that as Nero was more disposed to mildness in the beginning, Paul's defense of his doctrine was more easily received; but that when he had advanced to the commission of lawless deeds of daring, he made the apostles as well as others the subjects of his attacks."<sup>201</sup>

### **Rome Burns; Christians Are Blamed**

On the night of July 18-19, 64 AD a fire began in the region of the Roman circus and consumed half the city before it was brought under control after six days. Of Rome's fourteen districts only four remained intact. Three were leveled to the ground. The other seven were reduced to a few scorched and mangled ruins.

Various stories circulated about its cause. Several claimed that Nero responsible. Some reported that he played his lyre as he watched the fire for inspiration. Others, however, claimed that he was out of town in Antium. Some claimed that the fire was some sort of an accident. Roman historian Tacitus (56-120 AD) wrote that after the fire, Nero brought in food supplies and opened shelters for the refugees.

Tacitus, about 117 AD, wrote that because some of the public believed that Nero was responsible for the fire, that Nero looked for someone else to blame. He needed a scapegoat. Tacitus wrote,

"Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class that was hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace.

Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in

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<sup>199</sup> Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus* (On Illustrious Men) 5

<sup>200</sup> Eusebius Pamphilius, *Ecclesiastical History* (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House) 1994, page 74

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid*, page 75

Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their center and become popular.

Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind.

Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired.

Nero offered his gardens for the spectacle, and was exhibiting a show in the circus, while he mingled with the people in the dress of a charioteer or stood aloft on a car. Hence, even for criminals who deserved extreme and exemplary punishment, there arose a feeling of compassion; for it was not, as it seemed, for the public good, but to glut one man's cruelty, that they were being destroyed."<sup>202</sup>

After the terrible fire that consumed much of Rome, anyone considered as a leader of the Christians in Rome would be subject to arrest and death, whether or not he was a Roman citizen. Paul's second arrest probably was in 64 AD and was in custody in Rome in 64 or 65 AD.

Tradition states that Paul spent his final days in Mamertine Prison. The prison originally had been a cistern for the city of Rome, but at some point, had been converted to a prison. Prisoners were lowered through an opening into this dungeon. Again, according to tradition, both Peter and Paul were imprisoned there.<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> Tacitus, *Annals*, 15.44

<sup>203</sup> <https://romesite.com/mamertine-prison.html>;

<https://www.abandonedspaces.com/public/mamertine-prison.html?firefox=1>



## ADDENDUM B

### First Epistle of Clement

Clement's *Letter to the Church of Corinth* (also designated as the *First Epistle of Clement*),<sup>204</sup> was a letter to the church in Corinth from the church of Rome. Clement wrote the epistle 95-96 AD, during the closing years of the apostle John's life, about the same time that the *Book of Revelation*, was composed by John.

A copy of the epistle is extant in a 2nd-century Latin translation and it is possibly the oldest existing Latin Christian document. The only document of similar age is *The Didache*. The epistle is quite long – twice as long as the Epistle to the Hebrews.

In Corinth, the letter was read aloud from time to time. This practice spread to other churches, and Christians translated the Greek work into Latin, Syriac, and other languages. It was transmitted in manuscripts among the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century churches as an attachment to a sermon known as, the *Second Letter of Clement*, written circa 125–140 by an unknown author. Many 3rd- and 4th-Century Christians considered the epistle to be Scripture.

The epistle is a response to events in Corinth, where younger members of the congregation had deposed certain elders (presbyters). Since none of the elders were charged with moral offences, Clement declared their removal to be high-handed and unjustifiable. Clement called on the congregation to repent, to restore the elders to their position, and to obey their superiors. He said that the Apostles had appointed the church leadership and directed them on how to perpetuate the ministry. Therefore, the disposition was against the will of God.

The epistle is valuable, in that it describes the church leadership of the First Century, which conforms to that presented in the New Testament epistles, using the terms ἐπίσκοπος (*episkopos*, overseers) and πρεσβύτερος (*presbuteros*, elders) interchangeably.

In its discussion of Church leadership, it refers to the ministry of Paul after his release from prison.

Clement alludes to the first epistle of Paul to the Corinthians as well as to Paul's epistles to the Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, and Philippians, Titus, 1 Timothy, numerous phrases from the Epistle to the Hebrews, and possible material from Acts. These New Testament allusions are employed as authoritative sources which strengthen the letter's arguments to the Corinthian church.

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<sup>204</sup>Κλήμεντος πρὸς κορινθίους (*klaymentos pros korinthious*)

## ADDENDUM C

### Casting and Drawing Lots in Bible times

In the Old and New Testaments lots were cast for many important decisions. Proverbs 16:33 is central to understanding that the ancient Jews and Christians believed God's will could be determined by the casting of lots *The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord.* This random form of determining an outcome is called "cleromancy" coming from the Greek word *kleros* meaning "lot, inheritance." We get our words "clerk," "clergy" and "cleric" from *kleros* probably because in ancient times those positions were originally chosen by lot and/or were inherited.

An example of casting lots is described in the Book of Jonah. Jonah was told by God to go to Nineveh and tell them if they did not repent, they would be destroyed. Jonah hated the Ninevites and boarded a ship going in the opposite direction. But one cannot run away from God. A huge storm came up and the whole crew was terrified and wanted to know who was responsible for the possible sinking of them and the ship, so— they cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah.

They asked him, "Tell us, who is responsible for making all this trouble for us? What kind of work do you do? Where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?" He answered, "I am a Hebrew and I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land." This terrified them and they asked, "What have you done?"

The sea was getting rougher and rougher. So they asked him, "What should we do to you to make the sea calm down for us?" He replied, "Throw me into the sea." Jonah 1:7-12

In the Old Testament, lots were cast for very important decisions:

- the distribution of priestly offices in the Temple was divided by casting lots (I Chronicles 24)
- the division of land among the twelve tribes of Israel (Joshua 18:10)
- when should each tribe bring wood for the altar (Nehemiah 10:34)
- which of two goats should be the scapegoat (Leviticus 16:8).

Various objects were used in casting or drawing lots.

- The Romans had dice. That was their means of casting lots.
- Some groups had two arrows that they used in drawing lots, one marked with a line as the correct one and the other not marked.
- Others used pebbles: a black pebble which was not the correct one and a white pebble which was the correct choice.
- Some used a long stick and a smaller stick in drawing lots. Those among whom the choice was being made would draw sticks, and the smaller stick would be the one chosen.

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) recounts "casting lots" as a method used in disputes over the allotting of inheritances in his day.<sup>205</sup> It is the use of the term, allotting, in this manner that has given the name, "lot," to a piece of property.

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<sup>205</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Ephesians*, tr. M. L. Lamb (Albany 1966), book 1, lecture 4, *ad* Eph. 1:11



## ADDENDUM E

### SABBATH DAY'S JOURNEY

The rabbis, seeking to give guidelines concerning how one might travel without violating the Mosaic Law's prohibition against working on the Sabbath (Exodus 16:27-30), established rule of the Sabbath day's journey. They established 2000 cubits as the distance that a person might travel on the Sabbath without it's being work.

The Sabbath day's journey had to be calculated as 2,000 cubits from one's house or domicile. They established this distance as being allowed because of the statement in Joshua 3:4, which was the distance between the ark and the people on their march. They assumed that this was the distance between the tents of the people and the tabernacle during the sojourn in the wilderness. Hence, it must have been allowable to travel that far in order to attend the worship of the tabernacle. We do not know when this assumption in regard to the Sabbath day's journey was made, but it seems to have been in force in the time of Christ.

It is difficult to determine the length of 2000 cubits in the terms of miles. Because the length of the cubit technically is determined by the distance between the elbow and the tip of the middle finger, it varied from time to time (the length always was 18-24 inches). During the Herodian dynasty, it was 2/3 of a mile and at other times, 7/8 of a mile.

The rabbis invented a way of increasing this distance without technically infringing the Law. They ruled that on the day before the Sabbath a person could deposit some food at the 2,000-cubit limit and then declaring that location to be a temporary domicile. They then could travel to that location on the Sabbath, partake of a bit of food, and then travel another 2,000 cubits from this point without transgressing the Law.

In some cases even this intricacy of preparation was unnecessary. For example, if someone were traveling on the eve before the Sabbath, the traveler might select some tree or some stone wall at a distance of 2,000 paces and mentally declare this to be his residence for the Sabbath. Then, he was permitted to go the 2,000 paces to the selected tree or wall and also 2,000 paces beyond.

If that action were chosen, the traveler had to recite, "Let my Sabbath residence be **at the trunk** of that tree," If he merely said: "Let my Sabbath residence be **under that tree**," this would not be sufficient, because the expression would be too general and indefinite (Tractate *Erubhin* 4:7).

Other schemes for extending the distance were devised by some rabbis, such as regarding the quarter of the town in which one dwells, or the whole town itself, as the domicile, thus allowing one to proceed from any part of the town to a point 2,000 cubits beyond its utmost limits. This was most probably the case with walled towns. Boundary stones have been found in the vicinity of Gaza with inscriptions supposed to mark these limits. The 2,000-cubit limits around the Levitical cities (Numbers 35:5) may also have suggested the limit of the Sabbath day's journey.

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## ADDENDUM F

### Judea, Samaria, & Galilee



**ADDENDUM G**  
**HISTORIC ECCLESIASTICAL COMMENTS ON BAPTISM**  
**LUTHER'S SERMON ON BAPTISM**

Vol. II, Page 75, of his works edited in 1551

“The term 'baptism' is a Greek word; it may be rendered into Latin by *mersio*: when we immerse anything in water, that it may be entirely covered with water. And though that custom be quite abolished among the generality (for neither do they entirely dip the children, but only sprinkle them with a little water) nevertheless they ought to be wholly immersed, and immediately to be drawn out again, for the etymology of the word seems to require it. The Germans call baptism '*tauf*' from depth, which they call '*tief*' in their language; as if it were proper those should be deeply immersed, who are baptized. And truly, if you consider what baptism signifies, you shall see the same thing required, for it signifies that the old man and our native character that is full of sin, entirely of flesh and blood as it is, may be overwhelmed by divine grace.

The manner of baptism, therefore, ought to answer to the signification of baptism, so that it may show forth a sign that is certain and full.”

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**JOHN WESLEY**

Explanatory Notes on the New Testament

Published by G. Lane & C.B. Lippett

For the Methodist Episcopal Church at the Conference Office

200 Mulberry St.

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1846

New York

**Page 220 (comments on Romans 6:4)** "Alluding to the ancient manner of baptizing by immersion."

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**NEW CATHOLIC BIBLE**

**Confraternity - Douay Version**

Imprimatur: Francis Cardinal Spellman, Archbishop of New York

The Catholic Book Publishing Co.

1957

**Footnote on Romans 6:3:** “St. Paul alludes to the manner in which Baptism was ordinarily conferred in the primitive Church, by immersion. The descent into water is suggestive of the descent of the body into the grave, and the ascent is suggestive of the resurrection to a new life.

St. Paul obviously sees more than a mere symbol in the rite of Baptism. As a result of it we are incorporated into Christ's mystical body and live a new life.”

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## JOSEPHUS' DESCRIPTION OF HEROD'S JEALOUSY OF ARISTOBULUS, RESULTING IN THE DROWNING OF ARISTOBULUS

### An Example of the Definition of the Greek Term, βαπτίζω, (*baptidzo*)

And now, upon the approach of the feast of tabernacles, which is a festival very much observed among us, he (Herod) let those days pass over, and both he and the rest of the people were therein very merry; yet did the envy which at this time arose in him cause him to make haste to do what lie was about, and provoke him to it.

For when this youth Aristobulus, who was now in the seventeenth year of his age, went up to the altar, according to the law, to offer the sacrifices, and this with the ornaments of his high priesthood, and when he performed the sacred offices,<sup>9</sup> he seemed to be exceedingly comely, and taller than men usually were at that age, and to exhibit in his countenance a great deal of that high family he was sprung from, - a warm zeal and affection towards him appeared among the people, and the memory of the actions of his grandfather, Aristobulus, was fresh in their minds; and their affections got so far the mastery of them, that they could not forbear to show their inclinations to him.

They at once rejoiced and were confounded, and mingled with good wishes their joyful acclamations which they made to him, till the good-will of the multitude was made too evident; and they more rashly proclaimed the happiness they had received from his family than was fit under a monarchy to have done.

Upon all this, Herod resolved to complete what he had intended against the young man. When therefore the festival was over, and he was feasting at Jericho<sup>10</sup> with Alexandra, who entertained them there, he was then very pleasant with the young man, and drew him into a lonely place, and at the same time played with him in a juvenile and ludicrous manner.

Now the nature of that place was hotter than ordinary; so they went out in a body, and of a sudden, and in a vein of madness; and as they stood by the fish-ponds, of which there were large ones about the house, they went to cool themselves [by bathing], because it was in the midst of a hot day.

At first they were only spectators of Herod's servants and acquaintance as they were swimming; but after a while, the young man, at the instigation of Herod, went into the water among them, while such of Herod's acquaintance, as he had appointed to do it, dipped (βαπτίζοντες)<sup>206</sup> him as he was swimming, and plunged him under water, in the dark of the evening, as if it had been done in sport only; nor did they desist till he was entirely suffocated. And thus was Aristobulus murdered, having lived no more in all than eighteen years, and kept the high priesthood one year only; which high priesthood Ananelus now recovered again.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>206</sup>The nominative, plural, masculine, present, active participle of βαπτίζω)

<sup>207</sup> Josephus Jewish Antiquities, Book 15 Chapter 3 Section 50-56

<http://www.biblical.ie/page.php?fl=josephus/Antiquities/AJGk15#03>

### GREEK LEXICON COMMENTS ON THE TERM

The primary word from which all others are derived is βάπτω (*bapto*). This word means, *to dip or to dip in something*.<sup>208</sup> Greek terms that developed from this primary word are:

- Βαπτίσμος (*baptismos*), *dipping*. This is the term used for washing dishes in a pan of water, as well as the ritual washings that took place in the practice of rabbinic Judaism.<sup>209</sup>
- Βαπτίζω (*baptidzoh*), *mean, dip, immerse, middle voice, to dip oneself*.<sup>210211</sup> anglicized as *baptism*.

### THE DIDACHE'S STATEMENT DESCRIBING BAPTISM

The Didache, or *The Teaching of the Apostles*, was highly regarded in the second and third centuries especially in Syria and Egypt. It was used by the compiler of the Didascalia (C 2/3rd) and the Liber Graduun (C 3/4th), as well as being absorbed in toto by the Apostolic Constitutions (C. 3/4th, abbreviated as Ca) and partially by various Egyptian and Ethiopian Church Orders, after which it ceased to circulate independently. Athanasius describes it as 'appointed by the Fathers to be read by those who newly join us, and who wish for instruction in the word of goodness' [Festal Letter 39:7]. Hence a date for the Didache in its present form later than the second century must be considered unlikely, and a date before the end of the first century probable.<sup>212</sup>

Thus, the Didache is a reliable picture of the Church in the First and Second Centuries. Here is the Didache's record of the manner of baptism in that era.

"Now concerning immersion, immerse as follows: After you have reviewed all these things, immerse 'in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' in running water. But if you have no running water, then immerse in some other water; and if you are not able to immerse in cold water, then do so in warm. But if you have neither, then pour water on the head three times "in the name of Father and Son and Holy Spirit" (Chapter 7:1-3).

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<sup>208</sup> Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago, the University of Chicago Press) 1957, page 132

<sup>209</sup> BAG, page 132

<sup>210</sup> BAG, page 131

<sup>211</sup> In addition to these citations from BAG, see Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Volume I (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.) 1964, pages 529-546

<sup>212</sup> Jonathan Draper, *Gospel Perspectives*, v. 5 (JSOT Press, Sheffield England)) 1885, page 269)

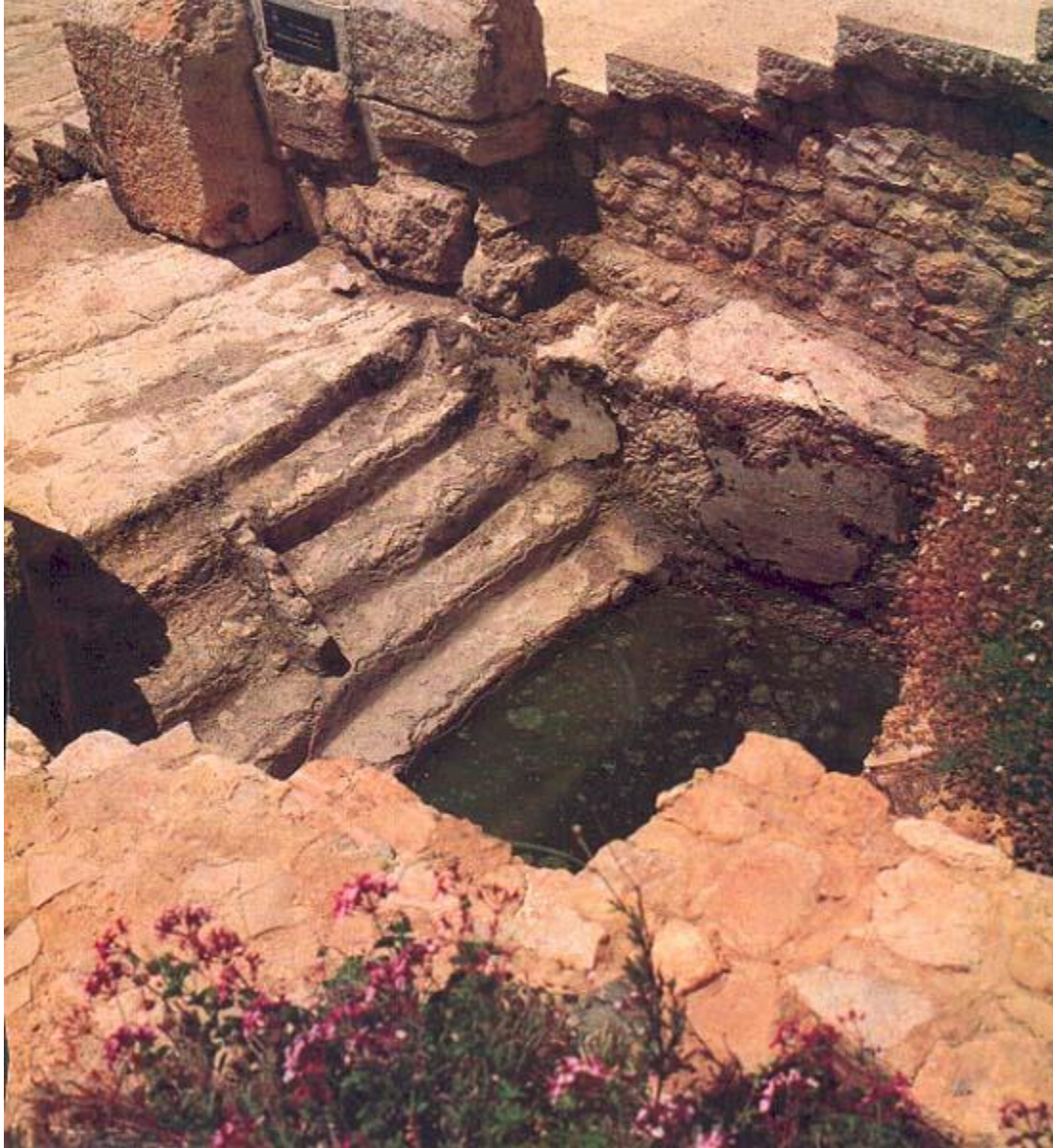


## ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE FOR JEWISH RITUAL IMMERSION

Biblical Archaeology Review 13:1, January/February 1987

### Discovering What Jewish Miqva'ot Can Tell Us About Christian Baptism

By [William Sanford La Sor](#)



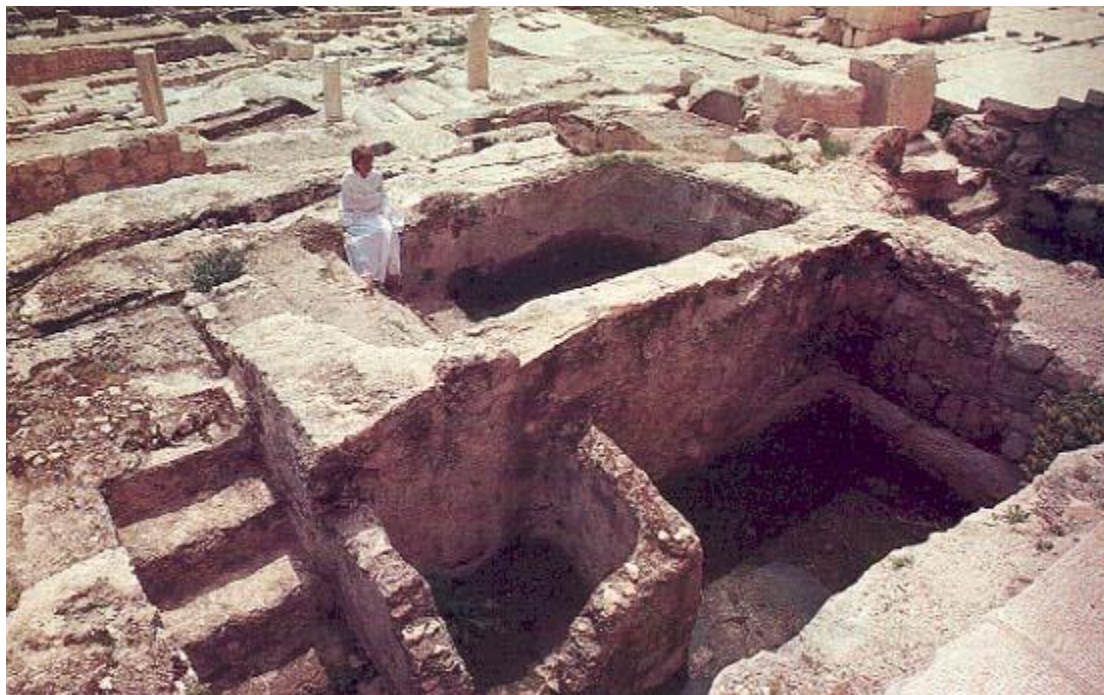
Until the discoveries of modern archaeology, we knew about ancient Jewish ritual immersion baths only from literary texts. Now, however, archaeology has provided us with numerous examples of Jewish ritual immersion baths, called *miqva'ot* (singular, *miqveh*), dating to the late Second Temple period, prior to and during the time when John the Baptist lived. These *miqva'ot* undoubtedly provide the background for Christian baptism. But many questions concerning the precise relationship are nevertheless likely to remain unanswered.

The first ancient *miqva'ot* to be identified as such were found by Yigael Yadin in the early 1960s at Masada, Herod's mountain fortress in the Judean wilderness. Masada later served as the last stronghold of the Jews in the revolt against Rome that culminated in the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 10 A.D. The 960 defenders of Masada held out for three years after Jerusalem fell.

Archaeologist Yadin describes the excitement at the discovery of two *miqva'ot* at Masada,<sup>1</sup> especially among talmudic scholars; they carefully measured the first one when it was unearthed in order to ascertain whether it conformed to the requirements of talmudic law, in other words if it was a genuine *miqveh*. The Masada *miqveh* passed the test.

The two Masada *miqva'ot* were at opposite ends of the site, apparently for the convenience of Masada's defenders. Functionally, the two were identical, although their measurements varied somewhat. Each was a complex of three pools. In one pool water was collected during the rainy season, directed there by a conduit. This reserve pool, or *otzar*, was connected by a pipe to a second pool that served as the actual ritual bath. Before the bath pool was used, the bung in the pipe connecting the reserve pool to the bath pool was opened to allow water to flow into the bath pool. The third pool in each complex was a small one unconnected to the other two pools. This small pool was for actual cleansing purposes—washing the hands and feet before immersing in the ritual bath.

The ritual bathing pool was meant not for hygienic cleansing, but rather for ritual purification. Thus Maimonides, a 12th-century exegete, stated: "Now 'uncleanness' is not mud or filth which water can remove but is a matter of scriptural decree and dependent on the intention of the heart."<sup>2</sup> Normal dirt, such as dust on the feet (*Miqva'ot* 9:2), was removed before entering the *miqveh*. Hence the need for the small pool for washing near, but unconnected to, the immersion pool.



Ritual purity was required of a Jew before entering the Temple Mount, before making a sacrifice, before receiving the benefit of a priestly offering and for other similar purposes. Impurity was occasioned by nocturnal emissions, sexual intercourse, or contact with a corpse. A woman was

unclean after her menstrual period or childbirth. Ritual immersion was part of the process to remove such uncleanness. In most cases, the impurity ceased at sunset after ritual immersion.

To understand how the Masada *miqva'ot* functioned, we must turn to the rabbinic texts that govern them. In this instance, the archaeological materials and the literary texts dovetail; each enhances our understanding of the other.

It is clear from the archaeological evidence that water for only a relatively few baths could be stored in the reserve pool of the *miqveh*. Obviously most of the water for the bath itself had to be drawn and brought from the huge cisterns that supplied Masada's needs.

But there is a problem. "Drawn" water—water carried to the *miqveh* in a bucket or vessel from a cistern—is impure according to Jewish law. "Flowing" water or "living" water—rain or spring or river water that has flowed directly into the *miqveh* is ritually pure by Jewish law. What happens when "impure," drawn water comes into contact with the pure water? The answer is explained in the Mishnah, a code of Jewish laws compiled about 200 A.D., and in the Mishneh Torah, a 12th-century compilation by Maimonides of existing talmudic law. "Flowing" water, it is said, purifies "drawn" water.<sup>3</sup> So when the "flowing" water stored in the collecting pool is allowed to come into contact with the "drawn" water via the connecting pipe the "flowing" water purifies the "drawn" water and makes the bath ready to use for ritual immersion.

Complete immersion was required.<sup>4</sup> Maimonides stated: "Whosoever immerses himself must immerse his whole body, naked, and all of it at once. . . . And if any who is unclean immerses himself in his garments, the immersion still avails him since the water enters through the garments and these do not interpose."<sup>5</sup> Even the hair must be totally immersed; ribbons on the heads of girls rendered the immersion invalid (*Miqva'ot* 9:1). Commenting on the Mishnah, Herbert Danby, whose translation of the Mishnah is the standard English version, observed, "For immersion to be valid, no part of the body's surface may be untouched by water."<sup>6</sup> However, the Mishnah states, "It is not needful that the water should enter into every orifice and wrinkle [in the body]" (*Miqva'ot* 8:5).

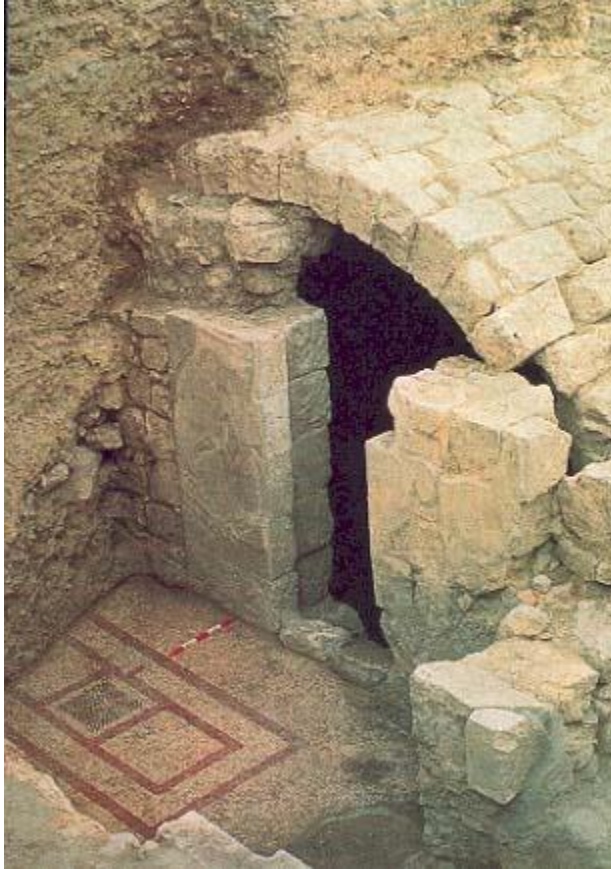
The immersion pool must contain at least 40 *seahs* of water. A *seah* is approximately two gallons (U.S.).<sup>a</sup> Traditionally, the ritual immersion or bath pool held almost three cubic cubits of water (about 75 U.S. gallons).<sup>7</sup> It was approximately one cubit square and three cubits deep, a cubit being about 18 inches. A height of three cubits was enough "to enable a person standing in it to be completely immersed, although the knees may be bent" (*Sifra* 6.3).<sup>8</sup>

Since the excavation of the *miqva'ot* at Masada, *miqva'ot* have also been discovered at a number of other sites, including Herodium in the Judean wilderness and King Herod's winter palace at Jericho.<sup>b</sup>

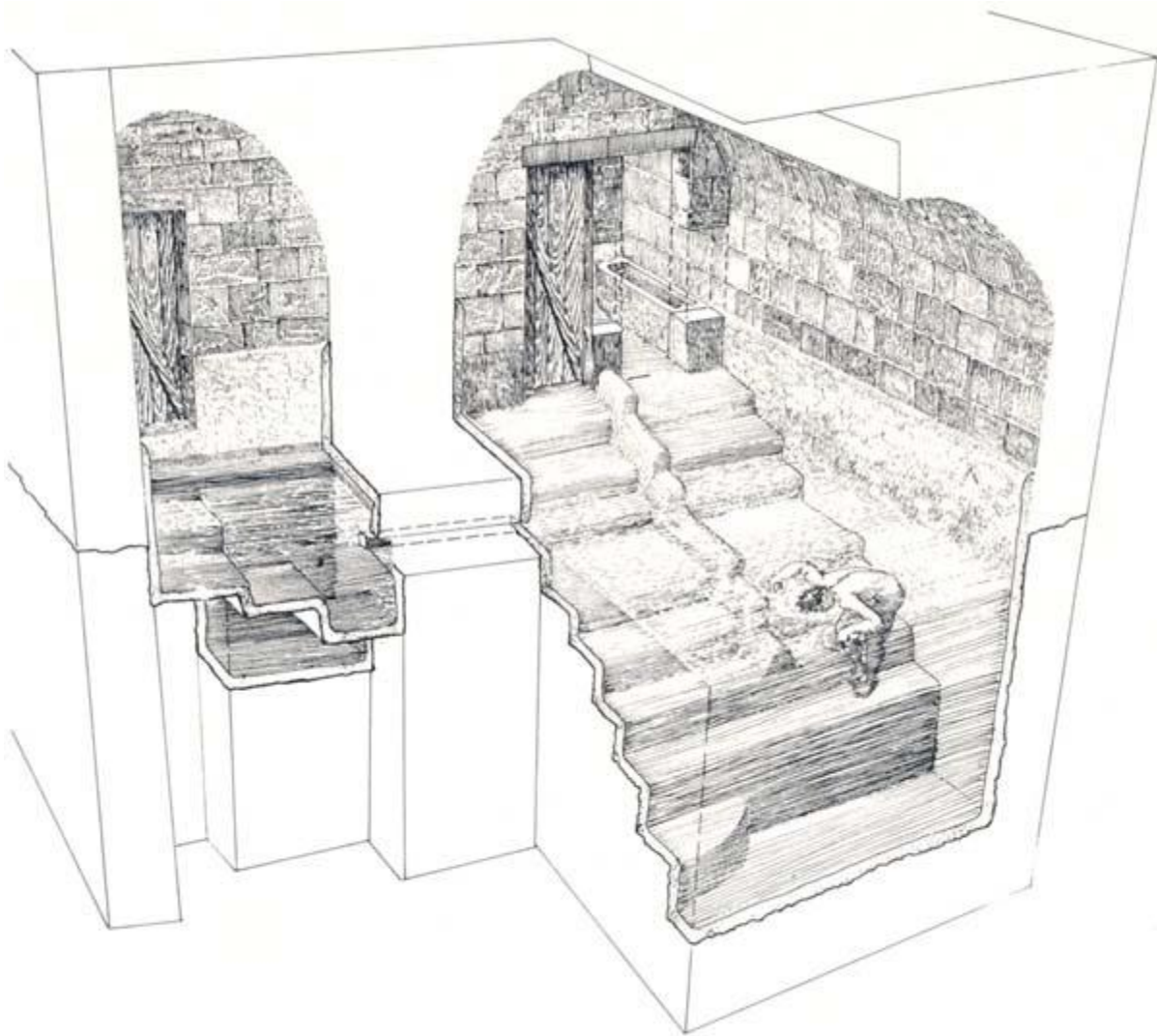
*Miqva'ot* have turned up in special abundance in excavations of late Second Temple Jerusalem—near the Temple Mount, in private homes of wealthy Jerusalemites who lived on the hill opposite the Temple Mount and elsewhere. One puzzle is that in most of these *miqva'ot*, archaeologists did not discover reserve pools.

Since 1967 two important excavations have been conducted near the Temple Mount. The first, led by Professor Benjamin Mazar of Hebrew University, uncovered a massive area south of the Temple Mount where in Second Temple times two monumental staircases led to the Temple Mount.<sup>c</sup> Pilgrims would enter and exit the Temple Mount by these staircases. Adjacent to the staircase on the east, Mazar found a number of *miqva'ot* that apparently served Jews who came

to Jerusalem to worship and offer sacrifices,<sup>9</sup> especially during the three pilgrimage festivals, Pesach (Passover), Shavuot (Weeks or Pentecost) and Sukkot (Tabernacles).

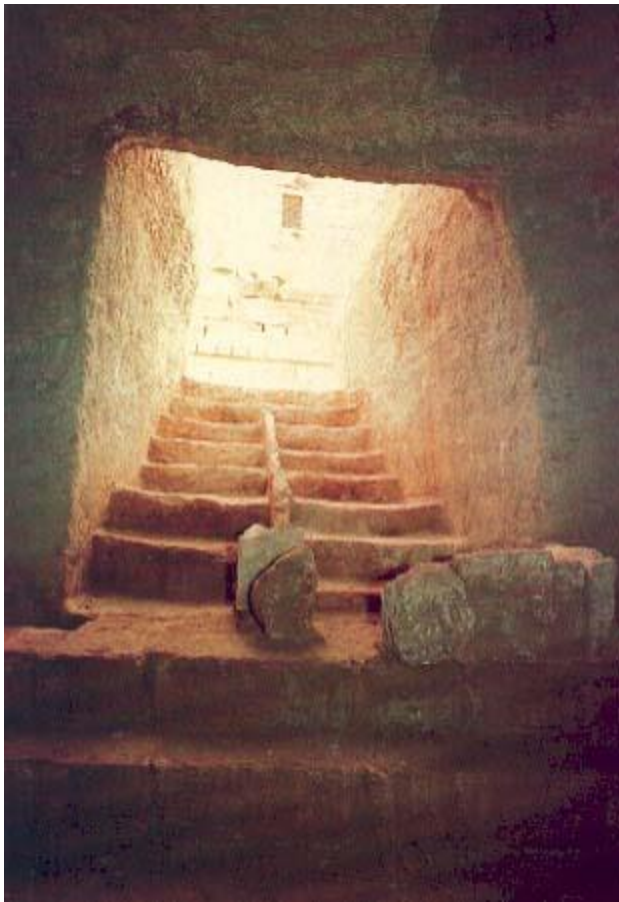


West of the Temple Mount, across the Tyropoean Valley, was the upper city of Jerusalem where the wealthy and the priestly families lived. Part of this area was excavated by Professor Nahman Avigad, also of Hebrew University, who reports finding in each house at least one *miqveh*, and sometimes more, cut from the rock and lined with a gray plaster.<sup>10</sup> One particularly elegant *miqveh* had a reserve pool, or *otzar*, containing living rainwater adjacent to the bath pool. Into the wall between the two pools a connecting pipe was built, through which the pure rainwater collected in the *otzar* could come in contact with the water in the bath pool, which was drawn from a nearby cistern. In this example, which is the only complete example of a *miqveh* complex found in this excavation, or anywhere in Jerusalem for that matter, a vestibule paved with mosaics led to the room with the ritual immersion pool and to the separate room with the reserve pool. In this *miqveh*, five steps ran the full length of the bathing pool. Several steps also led down into the reserve pool. Leading off the vestibule was another room with a bathtub, which people apparently used for ordinary, not ritual, bathing.



Just outside Jerusalem's Old City wall, west of the entrance known as Dung Gate, Israeli archaeologist Meir Ben-Dov also cleared an area that once contained the homes of wealthy Jerusalemites. Here, too, a number of *miqva'ot* were found. Today these *miqva'ot* are the most easily accessible to the visitor. Several of the ritual immersion pools, here as elsewhere, contain stairways divided by a wall. Since a person entering the *miqveh* is ritually unclean, different sides of the stairway were probably used to enter and to leave. As explained by **BAR** editor Hershel Shanks:<sup>11</sup>

“Especially palatial *mikva'ot* ... have two sets of stairs divided by a low wall or pillars. Presumably one set of steps was used to enter (while the bather was in an impure state), and the other set of steps was used to leave the purifying bath, uncontaminated by any contact with the impurities of the entrance steps.”<sup>d</sup>



The case of Qumran is especially interesting. At Qumran, on the northwestern shore of the Dead Sea, lived the people who hid the Dead Sea Scrolls in nearby caves. Most scholars identify the sect of Jews at Qumran as Essenes. Two years after the first Dead Sea Scrolls were found in 1947, a French archaeological expedition to Qumran began, led by Père Roland de Vaux of the École Biblique et Archéologique Française in Jerusalem. Strangely enough, although a large number of water installations were found during the seven-year course of the excavations, none was originally identified as a *miqveh*. Instead, they were regarded as ordinary baths or as cisterns for the collection of water in this arid area.

The reader will recall that at Masada Yadin found the first bathing installations identified as *miqva'ot*. Yadin dug in the early sixties. When he wrote his popular book on Masada, he was, of course, thoroughly familiar with the Qumran discoveries that preceded his Masada excavations; but somehow Yadin did not connect the cisterns at Qumran—even those that conformed rather closely to the ones found at Masada—with *Miqva'ot*.

Roland de Vaux published a report on his Qumran excavations in 1973. In it he stated that two small water installations “were certainly baths, but archaeology is powerless to determine whether the baths taken in them had a ritual significance.”<sup>12</sup>

In 1978 de Vaux modified his position somewhat:<sup>13</sup>

“This system was designed to fill the needs of a large community living in an arid region. However, the care taken in constructing these installations may suggest that they were intended for the ceremony of ritual immersion.”

Another weighty authority, Professor Frank Moore Cross of Harvard, seems to have rejected the notion that the Qumran water installations included *miqva'ot*; Cross wrote:<sup>14</sup>

“Unfortunately, the pools are typical examples of water reservoirs well known from other sites.”

Cross recognized that bathing was especially important to the Essenes of Qumran and that it had a ritual aspect, but he observed, “The living waters of the Jordan not far distant [or] possibly the waters of ‘En Feskah nearby would have sufficed.<sup>15</sup> In fact, the nearest point of the Jordan River was at least six miles away from Qumran—hardly an acceptable location.

A recent (1984) study by Bryant G. Wood of the University of Toronto<sup>16</sup> has shown rather conclusively that some of the water installations at Qumran were indeed *miqva'ot*.

Wood divides the Qumran water installations, or pools, into two types—those without steps and those with steps along the entire width of the pool. The latter he identifies as *miqva'ot*. He notes that steps the full length of the pool take up a large percentage of its volume, something the hydraulic engineers who designed the systems would never have tolerated if the purpose of the pool had been purely water storage. A narrow set of steps would have served as well. To those who argue that the steps were necessary to gain access to lower levels of water or to facilitate maintenance and cleaning, Wood replies that steps were not needed in the deepest of the Qumran cisterns, nor in other cisterns on the site. Wood believes that the full-width steps were intended to provide easy access on a regular basis for more than a few people who would together use the pool for a ritual bath. Moreover, some of the steps were divided in a way similar to the Jerusalem *miqva'ot* steps, further suggesting a ritual use. At Qumran, however, there were two dividers on the steps, creating three passageways. The central passageway was apparently used as a channel for water, leaving the other two dry—for entering and exiting.



Moreover, Wood argues, some of the bathing installations at Qumran were simply too elegant, too fancy, for just ordinary bathing. As Wood argues,<sup>17</sup>

“Such a well-appointed bathing facility would be totally out of keeping with the austere life of a religious sect living in an arid region. A simple tub is sufficient for most people, even those of us privileged to live in an affluent society where water is abundant.”

By an ingenious evaluation of the water needs of the Qumran inhabitants and of the total water reserve capacity, Wood persuasively argues that the people of Qumran had twice as much water as they needed and no doubt used much of the excess for ritual bathing. Wood concludes:<sup>18</sup>

“The stepped cisterns served other than a utilitarian function. Unless we imagine that the sectarians were constructing luxurious swimming pools, or assume a vastly oversized system or a much larger population than the evidence indicates, we must conclude that the stepped cisterns were used for religious rites. The number, size, and design of the stepped cisterns indicate that they were used frequently by a relatively large number of people. The small baths, on the other hand, were no doubt reserved for special ceremonies for individuals, such as initiation rites or the purification of a member who had fallen from grace.”

The importance the Qumranites attached to purificatory rites and water ablutions is now documented in the Temple Scroll, recently published by Yadin.<sup>19</sup> Sections of the document, which comes from the Qumran library, discuss ritual defilement caused by nocturnal emissions,<sup>20</sup> sexual intercourse,<sup>21</sup> physical impairment,<sup>22</sup> or contact with a corpse.<sup>23</sup> Several of these matters have been discussed in an article on the Temple Scroll by Jacob Milgrom.<sup>24</sup> But so far as I can tell, Milgrom does not refer either to the *miqva'ot* at Qumran or to the pertinent portions of the



tractate *Miqva'ot*. I must confess that I too failed to connect these passages from the Temple Scroll with the archaeological discoveries at Qumran when I discussed Qumran baptism.<sup>25</sup>

Now—with all this newly available evidence—we can ask what these *miqva'ot* can tell us about Christian baptism, for almost surely these Jewish *miqva'ot* provided the background for Christian baptism.

John the Baptist was a Jew. What little we know about him from the New Testament and from the first-century historian Josephus clearly indicates this.<sup>26</sup> John's father, Zechariah, was a priest of the division of Abijah who served, according to lot, in the Jerusalem Temple ([Luke 1:5](#), [Luke 1:9](#)). John was recognized by Jewish people as a prophet (Mark 11:32). A delegation from the Pharisees investigated him, asking him if he was Elijah or “the prophet” (John 1:19–28; cf. Deuteronomy 18:18). He proclaimed the presence of the kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 3:1). According to Josephus, the destruction of Herod's army was seen by some to be “divine vengeance,” for Herod had put John to death, “though he was a good man and had exhorted the Jews to lead righteous lives, to practice justice towards their fellows and piety towards God, and so doing to join in baptism.”<sup>27</sup> Equally important, his ministry was to Jews. This fact is surely of major significance in any attempt to understand John's baptism. No person seeking to influence Jews in any matter concerning religion would introduce something entirely new. If he could not support his ideas either from Scripture or from the sayings of recognized rabbis, he could not expect a hearing. We have only to examine the rabbinic sayings<sup>28</sup> or the Mishnah<sup>29</sup> to appreciate how much stress was laid by Jews on the continuity of tradition. We may therefore reasonably conclude that John's baptism was not something new. It was something that grew out of Jewish ritual immersion in *miqva'ot*.

First, let us consider what form early Christian baptism took—or more precisely pre-Christian baptism, because we are talking about the activities of John the Baptist, as described primarily in the Gospels. Later scholars (in the Middle Ages) took three principal positions based on a philological study of the various words and word forms used in the New Testament: Christian baptism involved (1) immersion, or (2) effusion—pouring water from a container over the person being baptized, or (3) aspersion—that is, sprinkling. Sometimes the doctrinal splits that developed among various churches over this question have been expressed colloquially as “to dip [immersion] or to sprinkle [aspersion].” The philological evidence is technical and inconclusive.

But the archaeological and Mishnaic evidence seems to support the argument for immersion. That is clearly what occurred in the contemporaneous Jewish *miqva'ot*, so that is probably what happened in early Jewish Christian baptism.

John's baptisms took place in the Jordan River (Matthew 3:6; Luke 3:3)—this conformed to rabbinic law, which required flowing or living water to provide a valid purification (*Mikva'ot* 5:5).

John also baptized at Aenon near Salim, “because there was much water there” (John 3:23). The location of Salim is uncertain, so we do not know precisely what the writer of the Fourth Gospel meant by “much water.” A location where there were numerous springs—for example, Umm el-Amdan, south of Scythopolis (Beth-Shean), as suggested by Eusebius<sup>30</sup>, is not unreasonable; but other locations are also possible. The reference to “much water” may well be the Gospel writer's way of indicating that the “living water” requirement had been met. If the water was copious, it was enough for immersion.

Next, we may ask what was the role of John and other baptizers in Christian tradition? Were they administering the baptism, immersing those who were being baptized? Again the philological evidence is technical and inconclusive. It is possible, perhaps probable, that John did not “administer the sacrament” (to use a church term), but rather witnessed the rite. Jewish law required ritual immersion in the *miqveh* to be witnessed, although it is clear that the person immersed him or herself. The Mishnah uses the words *tabal* “immersed himself” (*Mikva’ot* 2:1, 2) and *tabelu* “immersed themselves” (*Mikva’ot* 7:6).

Incidentally, to be a witness at a ritual immersion, it was not necessary to be a rabbi. Accordingly it would not have been necessary for the disciples to be rabbis if they either witnessed or “administered” a ritual immersion (baptism). Thus, we find Philip (most likely one of the Seven<sup>e</sup>), (Acts 6:5) and Ananias of Damascus involved in the baptism of the Ethiopian and Saul, respectively (Acts 8:38, Acts 9:18).

What lies behind the Christian custom of baptizing “in the name of”? According to several references in the New Testament, the new believer was to be baptized “in the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 2:38), “in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 8:16), or “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19). Paul asks the Corinthians, “Were you baptized in the name of Paul?” (1 Corinthians 1:13). There are also baptisms where “in the name” is not used.

A possible suggestion is that baptism “in the name of” was originally an indication of the required witness. John’s baptism was commonly referred to as “the baptism of John” (Matthew 21:25; Mark 11:30; Luke 7:29; Acts 1:22, 18:25, etc.), which could imply that he was the witness rather than the administrator. On the other hand, there is no talmudic basis, so far as I know, for naming the witness to ritual immersion when it is required.

One major difference between Jewish ritual immersion and Christian baptism has been mentioned by a number of scholars who have considered the possible relationship between the two. Jewish ritual immersion is purifying, or to use the technically correct term, purificatory. Christian baptism, on the other hand, is initiating, or initiatory; it is a one-time ritual that initiates the person into the sect.

Initiatory baptism, however, has its parallels in Jewish proselyte baptism.<sup>31</sup> Three things were required of a proselyte to Judaism: circumcision, the offering of a sacrifice and immersion in the *miqveh* (and of course acceptance of the Torah, the law). After the Roman destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D., the sacrifice was no longer required. While the Church confined its missionary activities to Jews, circumcision was not an issue. When it decided to reach out to gentiles, the requirement of circumcision was abrogated.

This left ritual immersion in the *miqveh* as the only applicable Jewish requirement of conversion. Ritual immersion (i.e., baptism) became the central Christian initiatory rite.

According to Jewish tradition, a convert “is like a new-born child.”<sup>32</sup> Jesus himself said that “Unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). How can he be born anew? “Unless he is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). Paul compares baptism with being baptized into death with Christ and risen with him to “walk in newness of life” (Romans 3–4).

(Since writing this, I have learned of a recent publication by a leading scholar on Jewish law of this period, expressing the view that Christian baptism most probably derives from Jewish proselyte immersion. I agree.)<sup>33</sup>

The early Church was composed in the beginning exclusively of Jews, and assuredly followed Jewish law and tradition. We can learn much about the early Church by a better understanding of its Jewish background. The Jewish *miqva'ot* and laws of ritual immersion are but an example.

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### THE DIDACHE'S STATEMENT DESCRIBING BAPTISM

The Didache, or *The Teaching of the Apostles*, was highly regarded in the second and third centuries especially in Syria and Egypt. It was used by the compiler of the Didascalia (C 2/3rd) and the Liber Graduun (C 3/4th), as well as being absorbed in toto by the Apostolic Constitutions (C. 3/4th, abbreviated as Ca) and partially by various Egyptian and Ethiopian Church Orders, after which it ceased to circulate independently. Athanasius describes it as 'appointed by the Fathers to be read by those who newly join us, and who wish for instruction in the word of goodness' [Festal Letter 39:7]. Hence a date for the Didache in its present form later than the second century must be considered unlikely, and a date before the end of the first century probable.<sup>213</sup>

Thus, the Didache is a reliable picture of the Church in the First and Second Centuries. Here is the Didache's record of the manner of baptism in that era.

"Now concerning baptism, baptize as follows: After you have reviewed all these things, baptize 'in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' in running water. But if you have no running water, then baptize in some other water; and if you are not able to baptize in cold water, then do so in warm. But if you have neither, then pour water on the head three times "in the name of Father and Son and Holy Spirit" (Chapter 7:1-3).

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<sup>213</sup> Jonathan Draper, *Gospel Perspectives*, v. 5 (JSOT Press, Sheffield England) 1885, page 269)

## ADDENDUM H

### Philip's Evangelistic Journey

From Samaria to the Gaza Road (40 miles)

From Azotus to Caesarea (50 miles)



# ADDENDUM I

## Location of Tarsus (In Present Day Turkey)



## ADDENDUM J

Phoenicia, Cyprus, Antioch, Tarsus



# ADDENDUM K

## Paul & Barnabas First Missionary Journey



## ADDENDUM L

### Church Councils of the First Four Centuries

1. 50 AD The Jerusalem Council, convened to resolve the question concerning whether or not Gentile converts had to be circumcised and obey the dietary and behavioral practices required in the Mosaic Covenant.(Acts 15)
  
2. 251 AD The Council at Carthage. During the persecution of the church by the Roman Emperor Decius, the Bishop of Rome, Fabian was martyred, and the persecution of all Christians became intense. Many Christians renounced their faith, in order to avoid the persecution. These became known as the *lapsi*. Following the persecution, the bishops of North Africa convened a council at Carthage to decide whether or not the lapsi could be readmitted to the church. The newly elected Bishop of Rome, Cornelius, argued that they could be. The scholar priest, Novation (the first Roman theologian to write in Latin), disagreed with Cornelius and he set himself up as *antipope*. Another influential leader, Cyprian of Carthage, opposed Novation, declaring that Novation was negating the Church's power to give absolution. The bishops meeting at Carthage in 251 AD agreed with Cyprian, i.e. that lapsi could be received back into the church. This led to the Novation controversy.
  
3. 325 AD The First Council of Nicaea. This was the First Ecumenical Council, with representatives from both the eastern and western churches participating. This council was called by Emperor Constantine, who had become a Christian. Constantine called the council because the civil unrest, caused by the Arian controversy that was bringing division into his empire. Arius contended that the son was begotten, and therefore had a beginning. That being the case, he was not of the same substance/divinity as the Father. Those who opposed Arius contended that the Father and the Son were of the same substance/divinity. The First Council of Nicaea denounced this view and declared the Father and the Son to be of the same substance. The council composed the Orthodox Creed that states that Son is *homoousian to Patri* (of one substance with the Father).
  
4. 381 AD The First Council of Constantinople (the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ecumenical Council). After the death of Emperor of Constantine, Emperor Constantius II gave his support to Arianism. This lengthened the controversy and division. The new Emperor, Theodosius, who came to the imperial throne in 380, sought to bring all churches back to the Nicæan position, and thus, he convened the First Council of Constantinople. This council reaffirmed the repudiation of Arianism. The council also condemned Macedonianism, which denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit.
  
5. 382 AD The Council of Rome. This council, called under Pope Damasus I, formally defined the Roman Catholic canon of the Bible. Here is its decree:

Now indeed we must treat of the divine Scriptures, what the universal Catholic Church accepts and what she ought to shun.

The order of the Old Testament begins here: Genesis one book, Exodus one book, Leviticus one book, Numbers one book, Deuteronomy one book, Josue Nave one book,



Judges one book, Ruth one book, Kings four books, Paralipomenon [i.e. Chronicles] two books, Psalms one book, Solomon three books, Proverbs one book, Ecclesiastes one book, Canticle of Canticles one book, likewise Wisdom one book, Ecclesiasticus [i.e. Sirach] one book.

Likewise the order of the Prophets: Isaias one book, Jeremias one book, with Ginoth, that is, with his Lamentations, Ezechiel one book, Daniel one book, Osee one book, Micheas one book, Joel one book, Abdias one book, Jonas one book, Nahum one book, Habacuc one book, Sophonias one book, Aggeus one book, Zacharias one book, Malachias one book.

Likewise the order of the histories: Job one book, Tobias one book, Esdras two books [i.e. Ezra & Nehemiah], Esther one book, Judith one book, Machabees two books.

Likewise the order of the writings of the New and Eternal Testament, which only the holy and Catholic Church supports.

Of the Gospels, according to Matthew one book, according to Mark one book, according to Luke one book, according to John one book.

The Epistles of Paul the Apostle in number fourteen. To the Romans one, to the Corinthians two, to the Ephesians one, to the Thessalonians two, to the Galatians one, to the Philippians one, to the Colossians one, to Timothy two, to Titus one, to Philemon one, to the Hebrews one.

Likewise the Apocalypse of John, one book. And the Acts of the Apostles one book.

Likewise the canonical epistles in number seven. Of Peter the Apostle two epistles, of James the Apostle one epistle, of John the Apostle one epistle, of another John, the presbyter, two epistles, of Jude the Zealut, the Apostle one epistle.”

NOTE: The Protestant canon accepts the thirty-nine books that the Jews have in their canon. Roman Catholics add seven books to the Old Testament. These seven additional books, Protestants label, *Apocrypha*.

## ADDENDUM M

### **Eusebius Account of the Death of James, the half-brother of Jesus<sup>214</sup> Eusebius cites Hegesippus, Clement, and Josephus**

The manner of James' death has been already indicated by the above-quoted words of Clement, who records that he was thrown from the pinnacle of the temple, and was beaten to death with a club. But Hegesippus, who lived immediately after the apostles, gives the most accurate account in the fifth book of his Memoirs. He writes as follows:

4. "James, the brother of the Lord, succeeded to the government of the Church in conjunction with the apostles. He has been called the Just by all from the time of our Saviour to the present day; for there were many that bore the name of James.

5. He was holy from his mother's womb; and he drank no wine nor strong drink, nor did he eat flesh. No razor came upon his head; he did not anoint himself with oil, and he did not use the bath.

6. He alone was permitted to enter into the holy place; for he wore not woollen but linen garments. And he was in the habit of entering alone into the temple, and was frequently found upon his knees begging forgiveness for the people, so that his knees became hard like those of a camel, in consequence of his constantly bending them in his worship of God, and asking forgiveness for the people.

7. Because of his exceeding great justice he was called the Just, and Oblias, which signifies in Greek, 'Bulwark of the people' and 'Justice,' in accordance with what the prophets declare concerning him.

8. Now some of the seven sects, which existed among the people and which have been mentioned by me in the Memoirs, asked him, 'What is the gate of Jesus?' and he replied that he was the Saviour.

9. On account of these words some believed that Jesus is the Christ. But the sects mentioned above did not believe either in a resurrection or in one's coming to give to every man according to his works. But as many as believed did so on account of James.

10. Therefore when many even of the rulers believed, there was a commotion among the Jews and Scribes and Pharisees, who said that there was danger that the whole people would be looking for Jesus as the Christ. Coming therefore in a body to James they said, 'We entreat thee, restrain the people; for they are gone astray in regard to Jesus, as if he were the Christ. We entreat thee to persuade all that have come to the feast of the Passover concerning Jesus; for we all have confidence in thee. For we bear thee witness, as do all the people, that thou art just, and dost not respect persons.'

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<sup>214</sup> Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book II, Chapter 23 (Grand Rapids, Baker Bookhouse) 1994, pages 75-77

11. Do thou therefore persuade the multitude not to be led astray concerning Jesus. For the whole people, and all of us also, have confidence in thee. Stand therefore upon the pinnacle of the temple, that from that high position thou mayest be clearly seen, and that thy words may be readily heard by all the people. For all the tribes, with the Gentiles also, are come together on account of the Passover.’

12. The aforesaid Scribes and Pharisees therefore placed James upon the pinnacle of the temple, and cried out to him and said: ‘Thou just one, in whom we ought all to have confidence, forasmuch as the people are led astray after Jesus, the crucified one, declare to us, what is the gate of Jesus.’

13. And he answered with a loud voice, ‘Why do ye ask me concerning Jesus, the Son of Man? He himself sitteth in heaven at the right hand of the great Power, and is about to come upon the clouds of heaven.’

14. And when many were fully convinced and gloried in the testimony of James, and said, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David,’ these same Scribes and Pharisees said again to one another, ‘We have done badly in supplying such testimony to Jesus. But let us go up and throw him down, in order that they may be afraid to believe him.’

15. And they cried out, saying, ‘Oh! oh! the just man is also in error.’ And they fulfilled the Scripture written in Isaiah, ‘Let us take away the just man, because he is troublesome to us: therefore they shall eat the fruit of their doings.’

16. So they went up and threw down the just man, and said to each other, ‘Let us stone James the Just.’ And they began to stone him, for he was not killed by the fall; but he turned and knelt down and said, ‘I entreat thee, Lord God our Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.’

17. And while they were thus stoning him one of the priests of the sons of Rechab, the son of the Rechabites, who are mentioned by Jeremiah the prophet, cried out, saying, ‘Cease, what do ye? The just one prayeth for you.’

18. And one of them, who was a fuller, took the club with which he beat out clothes and struck the just man on the head. And thus he suffered martyrdom.<sup>512</sup> And they buried him on the spot, by the temple, and his monument still remains by the temple.<sup>513</sup> He became a true witness, both to Jews and Greeks, that Jesus is the Christ. And immediately Vespasian besieged them.”<sup>514</sup>

19. These things are related at length by Hegesippus, who is in agreement with Clement. James was so admirable a man and so celebrated among all for his justice, that the more sensible even of the Jews were of the opinion that this was the cause of the siege of Jerusalem, which happened to them immediately after his martyrdom for no other reason than their daring act against him.

20. Josephus, at least, has not hesitated to testify this in his writings, where he says, “These things happened to the Jews to avenge James the Just, who was a brother of Jesus, that is called the Christ. For the Jews slew him, although he was a most just man.”

21. And the same writer records his death also in the twentieth book of his Antiquities in the following words: "But the emperor, when he learned of the death of Festus, sent Albinus to be procurator of Judea. But the younger Ananus, who, as we have already said, had obtained the high priesthood, was of an exceedingly bold and reckless disposition. He belonged, moreover, to the sect of the Sadducees, who are the most cruel of all the Jews in the execution of judgment, as we have already shown.

22. Ananus, therefore, being of this character, and supposing that he had a favorable opportunity on account of the fact that Festus was dead, and Albinus was still on the way, called together the Sanhedrim, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, the so-called Christ, James by name, together with some others, and accused them of violating the law, and condemned them to be stoned.

23. But those in the city who seemed most moderate and skilled in the law were very angry at this, and sent secretly to the king, requesting him to order Ananus to cease such proceedings. For he had not done right even this first time. And certain of them also went to meet Albinus, who was journeying from Alexandria, and reminded him that it was not lawful for Ananus to summon the Sanhedrim without his knowledge.

24. And Albinus, being persuaded by their representations, wrote in anger to Ananus, threatening him with punishment. And the king, Agrippa, in consequence, deprived him of the high priesthood, which he had held three months, and appointed Jesus, the son of Damnæus."

25. These things are recorded in regard to James, who is said to be the author of the first of the so-called catholic epistles.

# ADDENDUM N

## Paul's Second Missionary Journey



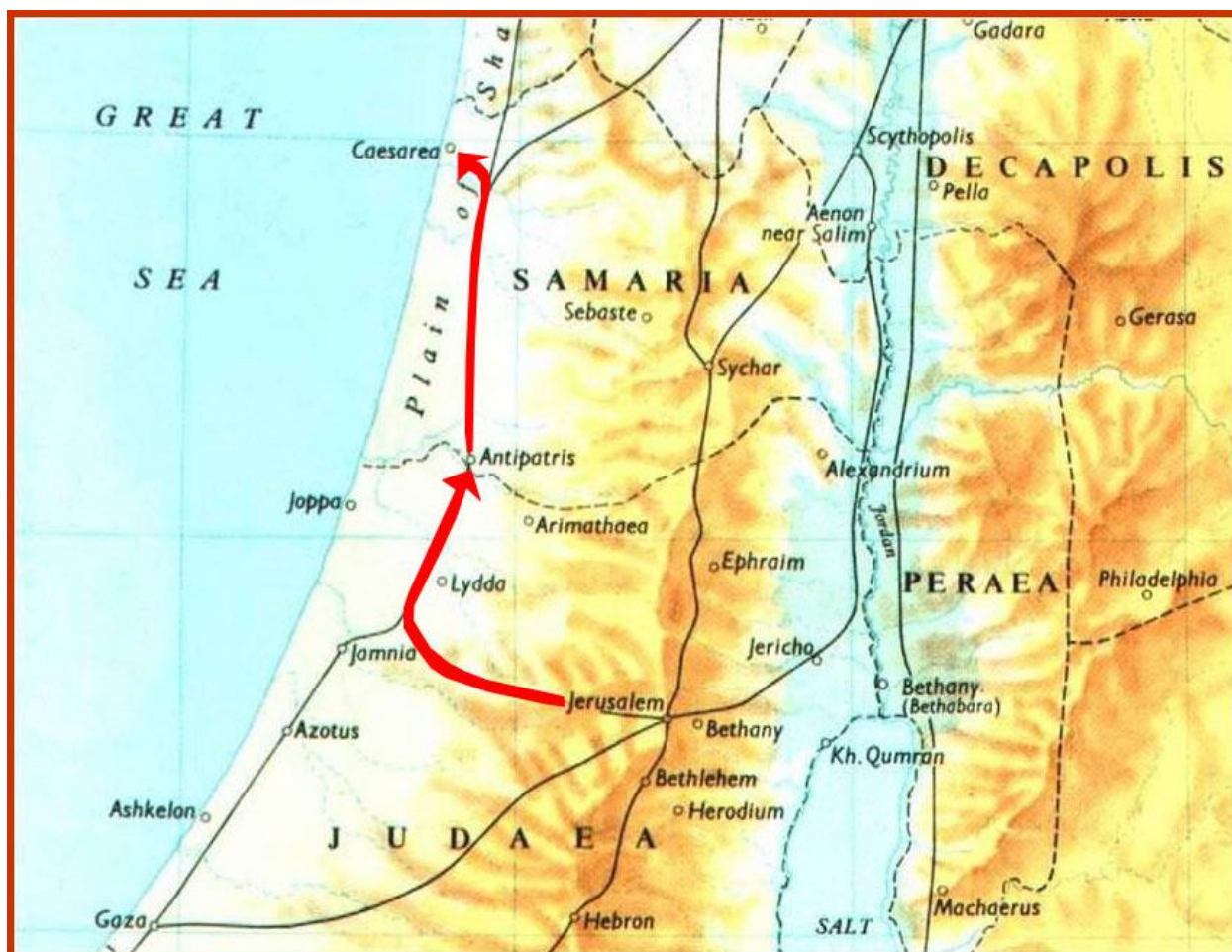
## ADDENDUM O

### Paul's Third Missionary Journey



## ADDENDUM P

### Jerusalem, Antipatris, and Caesarea



# ADDENDUM Q

## Paul's Journey to Rome

