

Paul

His Life and Ministry

**Sunday Night Seminar
Tulsa Christian Fellowship
January/February 2007**

INTRODUCTION

Before launching into the biblical record of Paul's life and ministry, we present a summary of pertinent ancillary information that will assist us in understanding the text.

Section One: Who was Paul?

The most frequently suggested date for Paul's birth is 6 AD. He was martyred either in 64 or 68 AD. Those who hold the view that he was executed shortly after the close of the narrative in Acts would consider c.64 to be the date of his death. My own view is that the evidence weighs heavily on the side of his being released after that imprisonment and having four or five years of ministry before his second arrest and martyrdom in 68 AD. Because of the life of hardship which Paul endured, as well as the average life span of that era, his 58-62 years must be considered as a long life.

Paul's Parentage

Paul was born to unnamed Jewish parents who were of the tribe of Benjamin. His self-description leads us to conclude that they were devout Jews.

But perceiving that one group were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, Paul began crying out in the Council, "Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees;..."¹

*If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more:
circumcised the eighth day,
of the nation of Israel,
of the tribe of Benjamin,
a Hebrew of Hebrews;
as to the Law, a Pharisee;
as to zeal, a persecutor of the church;
as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.²*

Paul communicated this picture in more fragmentary form in many of his writings (Romans 11:1; II Corinthians 11:22; Galatians 1:14; see also Acts 22:3; 23:6; 26:5)

It is not surprising that his parents named him after the most famous member of their tribe, Saul, the first king of Israel.

¹ Acts 23:6

² Philippians 3:4-6

Paul's Birthplace

Saul was a native of Tarsus, which he described as “no insignificant city.”³ The region surrounding Tarsus had a colorful history. Cilicia became a part of the empire of Alexander the Great in 333 BC, when he defeated the Persian forces there in the battle of Issus. After Alexander's death, his empire was divided among three of his generals who established personal dynasties. Cilicia was a part of the Seleucid dynasty. Another post-Alexandrian dynasty, the Ptolemies, contested for part of the region. In time, the region became a base for robbers and pirates. Roman General, Pompey, defeated the pirates in 67 BC and the whole of Cilicia became a Roman province with Tarsus as the capital. From 25 BC until 72 AD, Eastern Cilicia (including Tarsus) was united with Syria. Thus, during Paul's lifetime, his native city was a part of Syria-Cilicia. This is in keeping with a statement that Paul made concerning his whereabouts after a brief visit to Jerusalem, he “went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.”⁴ In Paul's day, Greater Tarsus population was around 500,000 – definitely a major city for that time.⁵

The Roman rulers gave special status to Tarsus. Caesar Augustus declared Tarsus a “free city.” As a virtual city-state it had the right to enact its own laws, it was free from import and export taxes, and largely was self-governing. Ramsey reports another interesting aspect of Tarsus' governmental pattern, “Tarsus in the reign of Augustus is the one example known in history of a State ruled by a University, acting through its successive principals.”⁶

Tarsus was well known for its philosophical richness. Many of the noted philosophers of the First Century were based in Tarsus. Especially prominent were the Cynics and Stoics. When Paul commented in I Corinthians concerning the failure of man's wisdom, he no doubt had in the back of his mind some of the noted philosophers whom he had heard lecturing in the streets of his hometown.

Tarsus also was known for its wickedness. It was reckoned by ancients with the three C's of immorality: Cappadocia, Cilicia, and Crete. No doubt Paul's description of the devolution of society (Romans Chapter One) was influenced by his memories of Tarsus.

Tarsus was a Greek city, oriental in culture, with a large Jewish colony. When the Greek Selucid leader, Antiochus Epiphanes, sought to reconstruct the city as a free self-governing city, he settled a body of Jews there in 171 BC.⁷

Paul's Citizenship

Even though Saul's father was a Jew, he also was a Roman citizen. Roman citizenship could be obtained by a non-Roman through outstanding service to the empire, through financial means, or through the favor of some notable Roman official. No existing record informs us as to how Saul's father obtained the status of citizen. Perhaps his grandfather, or great-grandfather had obtained citizenship. It has been suggested by one writer that since his family seems to have

³ Acts 21:39 – ἄσημος *asemos* = obscure, insignificant

⁴ Galatians 1:21

⁵ Sir William Ramsey, *The Cities of St. Paul* (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House) 1907, page 97

⁶ Ramsey, page 235

⁷ Ramsey, page 180

been a tent-making family, that a proconsul may have awarded citizenship because of the family's valuable contribution to his combat troops. All of this is speculation. We have no clue as to how the citizenship was obtained, nor to which generation of Paul's forebears the grant was given.

Being Roman citizens, Saul's family probably owned real estate. Concerning their position in the community, F.F. Bruce writes, "One thing is certain, however: among the citizens and other residents of Tarsus the few Roman citizens, whether Greeks or Jews by birth, would constitute a social elite."⁸ Their prosperity enabled them to send Saul to Jerusalem to attend the prestigious school of the noted rabbi, Gamaliel.

If a man were a Roman citizen, all of his offspring were citizens. Roman citizens enjoyed certain privileges that were not accorded the general population - such things as the right to a fair trial, exemption from degrading punishments (such as whipping), and the right of appeal. Acts records episodes in which Saul exercised these privileges (Acts 16:37-39; 22:25-29; 25:11-12). Because he was a Roman he would have been executed by beheading, a quick death, rather than one of the slower and more tortuous methods employed by the Romans (such as crucifixion).

As a Roman citizen, Paul had three names:

- Forename (*praenomen*) Saul
- Family name (*nomen gentile*) unknown
- Additional name (*nomen*) Paullus

If we knew Paul's family name, we might have some hint as to how his family gained citizenship; new citizens commonly assumed their patron's name as their family name.

Saul, the Pharisee

As already noted, Saul was a student of the noted rabbi, Gamaliel. In New Testament times, there were two schools of Jewish legal interpretation, represented by two influential rabbis, Shammai and Hillel.

- Shammai taught that every law should be obeyed because it was a commandment of the Holy One – theirs to obey, not theirs to reason why. The breach of one law, by commission or omission, constituted a breach of THE Law.
- Hillel had a slightly different take on things. He taught that Divine judgment was based on the preponderance of good or evil in a person's life – viewed as a whole. When asked by a man to summarize the Law, Hillel replied, "What is hateful to yourself, do not to another. That is the whole law and the rest is commentary."⁹ This, of course, is a negative expression of the Golden Rule.

Hillel's view upset many Pharisees, because they said that it allowed for the Law to be binding only if it prevented a neighbor from suffering or promoted his good. This, of course, is not what Hillel intended.

⁸ F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*, (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.) 1997, page 38

⁹ Bruce, page 49

Gamaliel was the successor to Hillel. There is some evidence that he was his grandson.¹⁰ He was the most respected rabbi of his era. When Gamaliel died, it was said, “When Rabban Gamaliel the elder died, the glory of the Torah ceased, and purity and ‘separateness’ died.”¹¹ Gamaliel was a member of the Sanhedrin, the Supreme Court of First Century Judaism. To Bible students, one of Gamaliel’s best known rulings relates to the early arrest of the apostles,

But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the Law, respected by all the people, stood up in the Council and gave orders to put the men outside for a short time. 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. But he was killed, 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. "So in the present case, I say to you, stay away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or action is of men, it will be overthrown; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them; or else you may even be found fighting against God."¹²

At a very early age, Saul’s family sent him to Jerusalem to study at the feet of Gamaliel. Paul’s address recorded in Acts 22:3 describes his birth and training.

I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up¹³ in this city, (Jerusalem) educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God just as you all are today.

Paul’s insistence that he was a “Hebrew of Hebrews” further indicates important information. The Jews who had been dispersed into the various nations usually attended synagogues in which Greek was the language of worship. Greek was their primary language. The Septuagint (a Greek version of the Old Testament) was their Bible. These Jews were *Hellenistic Jews* (In the Greek language, *Helles*, is the word for Greece).

Biblical Hebrew was a dead language in the New Testament era. The language of Palestinian Jews was Aramaic, a Semitic language that developed through the confluence of Hebrew, Phoenician, and other Palestinian languages. It is similar to Hebrew, but not identical. Writers of the New Testament era referred to Aramaic as, “Hebrew.” The stricter Jews attended synagogues in which Aramaic was the language of worship, rather than Greek. The language in which Jesus preached and taught was Aramaic.

¹⁰ Bruce, page 50

¹¹ Mishnah *Sotah* 9:15 Since the meaning of *Pharisee* is “separation,” in essence this eulogy declares that Phariseism died with Gamaliel – obviously an eulogic hyperbole.

¹² Acts 5:34-39

¹³ Some controversy exists over what Paul meant by the term, “brought up.” Did it mean that he lived in Jerusalem during his childhood, or does it mean that he lived in Jerusalem while receiving his schooling. The language can be understood either way. It is my opinion that he is referring to the time that he came to Jerusalem, perhaps as a teenager, and began training under Gamaliel.

Given Paul's statements concerning his parentage, "a Pharisee and son of Pharisees"¹⁴ and his own extreme orthodoxy, we would assume that his family spoke Aramaic in the home, even though they lived in a city whose colloquial language was Greek. The fact that he could address a Jerusalem audience in Aramaic (Acts 21:40; 22:2) and that the Lord addressed him in Aramaic during the Damascus Road vision (Acts 26:14)¹⁵ adds credence to the view that Aramaic was his mother tongue.

Saul's temperament was far different from that of his teacher and mentor, Gamaliel. Gamaliel's temperament was statesmanlike, expressing patience and tolerance. Saul was the opposite. He was zealous from his youth and he never lost that trait. Gamaliel urged patience to allow God to take care of things (Acts 5:34-39 – quoted above). Saul, however, saw the new Christian movement as a deadly threat to all that he held dear. In his zeal, Saul displayed an attitude more like that of Shammai than that of Hillel.

Whether or not Jesus came forth from the grave was a secondary issue to Saul. Of primary consideration was the fact that Jesus was crucified. A crucified Messiah was blasphemy, because anyone who hung on a tree was cursed. Saul's understanding of the Messiah did not allow for such a consideration. His view was based on Deuteronomy 21:23¹⁶

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.

This is the same issue that the Jews raised when Jesus predicted His crucifixion

"And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself." But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die. The crowd then answered Him, "We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever; and how can You say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this Son of Man?"¹⁷

When the Sanhedrin actively began to persecute the Church, Saul quickly became the chief enforcer.

¹⁴ Acts 23:6

¹⁵ As noted above, Aramaic was called, "Hebrew," in the First Century.

¹⁶ Later, after his conversion, Paul had a different view toward the crucifixion of the Messiah. *but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness,* (1 Corinthians 1:23); *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us-- for it is written, "cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree "*(Galatians 3:13)

¹⁷ John 12:32-34 To be "lifted up," was a colloquialism for crucifixion, so understood by everyone. This contradicts the popular use of this passage, i.e., to lift up Jesus means to publicize or exalt Him.

Paul's Physical Appearance

There is no biblical description of Paul's appearance, other than his quote of the derogatory comments made by his detractors in Corinth

For they say, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his personal presence is unimpressive and his speech contemptible."¹⁸

Outside of Scripture there is a tradition concerning his appearance, recorded in a post-biblical document, *The Acts of Paul*. This document was written by an unnamed elder in the province of Asia more than a century after Paul's death (in the decade 170-180 AD).¹⁹ The author claims to have penned the document out of love for Paul, but it contains so many things that offend against the biblical picture of Paul, at least one glaring contradiction of Paul's doctrine concerning sex and marriage, and so many fantasies, that the author was deposed from his office.²⁰ The document probably contains some reliable traditions and reminisces, evidenced by the accuracy of topographical and historical figures. The physical description of Paul may or may not be correct, but some writers contend that it is substantiated by glimpses in other documents.²¹

“A man of middling size, and his hair was scanty, and his legs were a little crooked, and his knees were far apart; he had large eyes, and his eyebrows met, and his nose was somewhat long. Full of grace, he appeared sometimes like a man and at other times he had the face of an angel.”²²

Paul's Marital State

Was Paul married? Some argue that Paul was married, or a widower, or a divorcee. They base their argument on the secondary inferences.

- Some have argued that a rabbi had to be married, and thus, Paul would have been married.

¹⁸ II Corinthians 10:10

¹⁹ The work contains three sections: (1) The story of Paul and the virgin, Tekla, in Iconium, who left her betrothed in order to follow Paul as a preacher of the word of God; (2) the apocryphal 3rd Letter to the Corinthians; (3) the martyrdom of Paul. Among the erroneous teachings of the book is the doctrine that Christians should practice sexual abstinence in marriage, a view that totally contradicts Paul's teaching in I Corinthians 7.

²⁰ Information concerning the author's removal from the office of elder is given in the writing of Tertullian *De Baptismo* Chapter 17. Other early church writers mention the document, but none of them names the author

²¹ Olaf Moe, *The Apostle Paul* (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House) 1968, page 13. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, Volume I, "Apocryphal Acts," I, 3. The Acts of Paul page 189; Volume IV, "Paul, the Apostle," IV, 6. Personal Characteristics, page 2277 (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans) 1952. [Even though Moe contends that this description is consistent with earlier glimpses, he does not cite any of these documents, nor did I find any other author making this contention who cited sources-JWG]

²² *ISBE*, Volume I, page 189, Acts of Paul, 2.

The weakness in this argument is three-fold (1) uncertainty about such a rule for rabbis, (2) the uncertainty as to whether or not Saul had attained the status of rabbi,²³ (2) statements in Scripture and tradition that contradict the idea of his being married.

- Some argue that Paul's statement to the Corinthians, *Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?*²⁴ implies that he was married. These contend that Paul probably was a widower, who had occasionally traveled with his wife, before her death.

The context in which that statement is made (I Corinthians 9:1-18) is a declaration by Paul that even though he and Barnabas had a right to be supported by the church, he had not claimed that right. Instead, he and Barnabas had ministered at their own expense. As an example of the rights that they had foregone in order to advance the Gospel, was the right to have a wife accompany them on their trips. There is nothing implied in this statement as to whether or not they were married – they just didn't claim the right to have a wife traveling with them. It takes a large measure of speculation to read into these statements the idea that at some point in the past, Paul had been accompanied by a wife.

Paul's own statement concerning his marital status, is so defining that it is difficult to conclude anything other than that Paul was committed to a celibate life.

Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman. But because of immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband.

The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.

Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

But this I say by way of concession, not of command.

Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am.

However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that.

But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I.

But if they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.²⁵

²³ Saul never is referred to as a rabbi, or a teacher (both Jesus and John the Baptist were addressed by that title). He was a student. If the date of his birth was 6 AD and his conversion was in 36 AD, he would have attained the age of thirty at about the same time of his conversion. Usually, one did not embark upon a rabbinic career until his 30th birthday. So, Saul probably had not attained that status, at the time of his conversion.

²⁴ I Corinthians 9:5

²⁵ I Corinthians 7:1-9

Paul clearly declared that a sexually active marriage was the normal state for most people. This contradicted the doctrine of asceticism that some legalists were seeking to impose on the church.²⁶ Yet, he also recognized that for some there is a special calling to celibacy, and that those with that calling received a special grace that enabled to live a celibate life. He declared himself to be one of those so called and graced. This is in keeping with Jesus statement,

*For there are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb; and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men; and there are also eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to accept this, let him accept it.*²⁷

Later in the same portion of the Corinthian Letter, Paul presented his reason for preferring the celibate life.

But I want you to be free from concern.

One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and his interests are divided.

The woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband.

*This I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is appropriate and to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord.*²⁸

Thus, the only reasonable conclusion is that Paul lived a single life, throughout his days.²⁹

Section Two: Paul's World

The world in which Paul lived and carried out his ministry was ideally suited for the task to which God had called him. Paul's statement in the Galatian Letter is most apropos to the very setting for Paul's labors.

*But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law,*³⁰

²⁶ I Timothy 4:1-4

²⁷ Matthew 19:12

²⁸ I Corinthians 7:32-35

²⁹ A very readable and devout book, Taylor Caldwell's novel about Paul, *Great Lion of God* (Garden City, NY, Doubleday & Company – 1970), contains a fictional account of Saul's teenage tryst with a Greek Slave. In Caldwell's account, this single sexual failure haunted Saul/Paul for the rest of his life and had something to do with his rigid stance on celibacy.

³⁰ Galatians 4:4

In 536 BC, Cyrus, leading a force consisting of the Medes and Persians, conquered Babylon. Almost immediately thereafter, he began to send the Jewish exiles back to their homeland in Palestine. The return was accomplished in three waves:

536 BC Zerubbabel with 42,360 Jews 7,337 servants, 200 singers, 736 horses, 245 mules, 435 camels, 6,270 donkeys, and 5,400 gold and silver vessels.³¹

457 BC Ezra with 1754 males, 100 talents of gold, 750 talents of silver. This journey took four months. Scripture does not state whether or not women and children accompanied the men.³²

444 BC Nehemiah, as governor, traveled to Palestine with an army escort. His mission was to rebuild Jerusalem, at Persian government expense.³³

There were several interruptions in the work. The restoration/reconstruction era came to a close in 432 BC, when Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem. He had made a trip to Babylon to defend the Jews against accusations by their neighbors.

Persia was the dominant world power, during this period. The vast Persian empire was the largest empire that the world had seen. It stretched from Asia Minor to India, from Egypt to what now is Central Asia (Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan), even touching the borders of China.

The powerful Persian rulers were more or less guardians of the Jewish people. It was during this period that Esther became the Queen of Persia, when she married Xerxes³⁴ (ruled 485-465 BC). The Jew, Mordecai, was Prime Minister of Persia, during Xerxes reign.

In the middle of the Fourth Century BC, Philip II from Macedonia had a dream. He dreamt of a united Greece, which could challenge the Persian Empire. What we now know as Greece, always had been a region consisting of self-governing city states, and autonomous territories. Philip was a master of the art of war. He developed the Macedonian phalanx³⁵ (also known as “the turtle,” because the formation had the appearance of a turtle shell). In the phalanx, the front rank of infantrymen stood shoulder with their large shields interlocking. Those on the left and right ends of the second rank and following, interlocked their shields to protect the flank. When opposing forces launched a rain of arrows against the phalanx, the soldiers in the middle of the formation lifted their shields overhead, thus deflecting the missiles. These foot soldiers were equipped with spears that were twice as long as conventional spears. The phalanx was the ancient equivalent to a modern day tank. Each phalanx was flanked by shock troops – skilled horsemen of Thessaly and Macedonia.

As Philip and his army rolled south, the Greek cities resisted. In Athens orators spoke out against the northerner. Demosthenes, in one of his speeches, coined the derogatory term that still prevails in English, “philippic.”

³¹ Ezra Chapter 2

³² Ezra Chapters 7-8

³³ Nehemiah Chapter 1-2

³⁴ also known as Ahasuerus.

³⁵ Φάλαγξ

The decisive clash came in 338 BC at Chaeronea, northwest of Athens. Philip commanded the right wing while his 18 year-old son, Alexander led a cavalry charge from the left. They wheeled and chewed up the Greek center. All of Greece except Sparta submitted to Philip. After this stunning victory, Philip prepared to lead a united Greek force against Persia. However, before he could undertake the mission he was assassinated.

Alexander caught his father's dream and even enlarged it. He had seen his father unite Greece. He queried, "Why not do this with the whole world – why should the nations be divided – why not be a one-world nation?" He set out to make that happen.

For thirteen years, he led his troops through present day Bulgaria, south through Palestine to Egypt, through present day Syria, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Central Asia, Pakistan, defeated the rulers of Western India, and cities on the border of China.

Every place that he and his armies traveled, the defeated nations joined his army. In order to create a picture of one world, in Susa in 324 BC, Alexander married Barsine, daughter of the defeated Persian ruler, Darius. He had 80 of his Macedonian officers marry Persian noblewomen and 10,000 of his troops marry common Persian women.

Alexander installed Greek rulers who were charged with changing every society into a Greek culture. As a result of Alexander's conquest, Greek became the universal language throughout most of the known world.

In the spring of 323, on his way back home to Greece, Alexander entered Babylon for the last time. Worn out by wounds, hardship, and overdrinking, he succumbed to a fever. He died within two days, not yet 33 years old.

After his death, there was a time of temporary unrest and vying for power among his surviving generals. Very shortly, only his three strongest generals remained and they divided the Empire between themselves:

- Antigonus in Macedonia
- Seleucus in Syria
- Ptolemy in Egypt.

Although Palestine geographically was a part of the Seleucid Empire, it was more of a buffer between the Seleucids and the Ptolemies. Palestine became a frequent pawn between these two dynasties. Ultimately the Seleucids gained the upper hand, with the help of the Jews, who thought that the Seleucids would more favorable to their race.

The Seleucid who finally gained control of Palestine was Antiochus III, commonly known as, "Antiochus the Great," who won a decisive victory over the Ptolemies in 198 BC. In 197 BC, Antiochus fought Romans at Macedonia and was defeated. As a result of that defeat, he was obliged to pay tribute to Rome. In order to pay the tribute, he plundered every treasury that he could get his hands on. He was slain in 187 BC, while plundering a Greek temple.

The next Seleucid ruler was Antiochus' son, known as Antiochus Epiphanes (the "illustrious"). He began by heavy-handed tactics to enforce Hellenization upon those portions of his empire that had resisted becoming Greek. This caused strong resistance among the faithful Jews. The "Chasidim" was the label given to the Jews who began to put forth armed resistance against Epiphanes.

Matthias, a priest of the noblest order, slew a Jew who succumbed to the king's order to offer sacrifices to an idol. He also slew the king's messenger who was enforcing out the king's mandate. Thus began the Maccabean revolt against the Seleucids. Although the revolt had mixed success at first (being led by a succession of Matthias' sons) until the youngest son, Jonathan, became the leader. Under Jonathan's leadership, the revolt achieved success. From 129 – 64 BC, this family was able to rule Judah as a Jewish state. The Jews had their sovereign nation, for 65 years, even though they still had to contend with political interference from the Seleucid rulers – who were vying among themselves for the Seleucid throne. The Ptolemies also made efforts, through intrigue, to reenter the area, but were not able to succeed. Sad to say, the jealousies within the Maccabean heirs that ensued during this time of sovereignty were bloody and violent. Tens of thousands of Jews were slain by other Jews, during this era.

At one point, when the internecine competition between Aristobulus and his brother Hyrcanus became intense, Aristobulus appealed to the Romans for help. For years, the Romans had looked for an opportunity to gain control of the area. Aristobulus' invitation was all that they needed. After several complicated political events, the Roman General Pompey, marched on Jerusalem. After a three-month siege, Pompey entered Jerusalem on Passover, 63 BC and all of Palestine became the property of Rome.

During this period the era known as *Pax Romana*, the "Peace of Rome" began. There was peace throughout the Mediterranean. The Romans established a very stable empire, based upon Roman law, which was fair and just to all people (compared to anything that had gone before).

Roads of the highest quality were built. The roads were 10–12 feet wide and models of road construction. Many of them still exist. Plutarch writes about one official's road building style,

"The roads were carried through the country in a perfectly straight line, and were paved with hewn stone and reinforced with banks of tight-rammed sand. Depressions were filled up, all intersecting torrents or ravines were bridged, and both sides were of equal and corresponding height, so that the work presented everywhere an even and beautiful appearance. Besides all this, he measured off all the roads by miles... and planted stone pillars as distance markers."^{36 37}

These roads made travel comfortable and efficient. Some noteworthy speed records were set by determined riders on horseback. Julius Caesar covered 800 miles from the Rhone River in France to Rome in eight days. Tiberius raced 500 miles in three days, to reach his wounded brother, Drusus. The official Roman messenger system, the *Cursus Publicus*, used couriers who

³⁶ Quoted in *Christian History*, Volume XIV, No. 3, 1995, page 17

³⁷ The Roman mile (derived from *mille passus*, "thousand paces") was about 4995 feet in length, in contrast to our mile of 5280 feet

changed horses at *stationes* every 10 miles or at *mansions* every 20 to 30 miles. They were expected to cover 50 miles a day. A courier could travel from Rome to Palestine in 46 days, from Rome to Egypt in 64 days. Those who traveled by carriage would cover 25 – 50 miles per day. The average traveler walked about 3 miles per hour for seven hours – about 20 miles per day.³⁸

Roman ships constantly patrolled the sea, keeping down the danger of pirates. Travel by ship was very cheap. Travelers bought very low priced tickets that allowed them to ride on grain ships that plied the Mediterranean.

Thus, when Paul began his evangelistic journeys, he could be understood in any city by speaking Greek. He could travel throughout the empire on good roads. He could make faster time by ship, when the season was right. The prevailing winds during the summer sailing season blew from the northwest. Thus, in season, a sea voyage could be made from Rome to Alexandria in 10 to 20 days. Going in the opposite direction took 40 – 65 days, in season. Very little travel by sea took place in the winter because it was too dangerous.³⁹

Reflecting this, Paul sailed from the Aegean to Palestine, but always walked from Palestine to the Aegean.

It is easy to see the hand of the Great Chessmaster in using

- Philip of Macedonia's dream
- Philip's timely death
- Alexander's dream and military skill
- the break up of Alexander's empire
- the military skill of the Maccabees
- the Roman desire for world domination
- the Roman commitment to law

in order to bring about the perfect setting in which Paul could fulfill his mission.

Paul lived and ministered in a world in which:

- Travel was safe, easy, and economical.
- There was a universal language.
- Freedom of religion was granted, as long as the practice thereof did not interfere with Roman rule and taxation.
- The ethnic religions were being questioned and rejected by many thinkers of the era.
- Judaism was divided between many sects and theologies – the people faced the confusion of contradicting religious authorities.

³⁸ *Christian History*, page 17-18.

³⁹ Various scholars have estimated the number of miles that Paul traveled as God's emissary. A conservative estimate is 17,285 miles, the equivalent of going west from Jerusalem to San Francisco and then back to New York City (*Christian History*, page 18)

- The stage was set for the world-wide proclamation of the Truth and the resulting Good News.

Section Three: A Chronology of Paul's Life

For the most part, *Acts* is arranged in chronological order. The exception being Chapter Eight, which presents the account of those who carried the Gospel from Jerusalem at the time of the dispersion. This portion of *Acts* begins at Jerusalem and follows the preacher or preachers through their respective experiences, then returns to Jerusalem for the next account.

The portion of *Acts* that is relevant to our study is consistently chronological. Even so, Luke, the author does not consistently give connected notes of time that firmly lock down the amount of time spent in certain places, nor frequent pegs that help us to date events. However, in the last portion of Paul's story, Luke gives a sufficient number of references to historical events that allow us to construct a general chronology of Paul's ministry. We work from the end back to the beginning.

A place to begin is Paul's arrest in Jerusalem. Luke gives us the following important information:

- Paul was arrested in Jerusalem at the feast of Pentecost (Acts 20:16; 21:17ff)
- He was held in prison for two years until the accession of Festus (Acts 24:27)
- The following autumn he was sent to Rome, reaching that destination the following spring (Acts 27:1, 9 [the fast was the Day of Atonement, in either September or October] 28:11-16 [they set sail after winter])
- He remained as a prisoner in Rome for two years (Acts 28:30)

Thus, we have almost five years occupied with this portion of Paul's story. These facts establish the following dates:

- It is well established that Festus was sent to Judea in 60 AD.⁴⁰
- Paul's arrest was at Pentecost, 58 AD.
- His departure to Rome was in the fall of 60 AD.
- He reached Rome in the spring of 61 AD.
- The *Acts* narrative closes in the spring of 63 AD.

Beginning with these facts, we proceed back into the earlier sections of the narrative. By counting backward from Paul's arrest in 58 AD, we reach the following conclusions:

- While traveling to Jerusalem, prior to his arrest, Paul spent the days of unleavened bread (the Passover season, early springtime, seven weeks before Pentecost) at Philippi (Acts 20:6)
- Paul traveled to Philippi directly from Greece, where he had spent three months (Acts 20:1-6). These were three winter months. Travelers usually suspended their journey

⁴⁰ J. W. McGarvey, *New Commentary on Acts of Apostles*, (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Company) 1892, page xxvi

during the winter, and resumed their travel in the spring. This puts us back to the winter of 57-58 AD

- Paul went directly to Greece from Macedonia. Therefore, he spent the fall of 57 AD in Macedonia (Acts 20:1-2)
- Paul wrote to the Corinthians from Ephesus. He told them that he intended to remain in Ephesus until Pentecost, then travel to Macedonia (the fall of 57) then, as already noted, spend the 57-58 AD winter in Corinth (Greece). Since he traveled from Ephesus (after Pentecost), to Macedonia, then to Corinth for the winter, he must have spent the summer in Macedonia. This would be the summer of 57 AD.
- Paul therefore left Ephesus after Pentecost in the early spring of 57 AD. This concluded his two years and three months residence in that city (Acts 19:8-10). This means that he began his work in Ephesus late in 54 or early 55 AD.

From this point backward, there are no connecting figures until the death of Agrippa in 44 AD. However, a good degree of probability can be achieved by reading the accounts, about how much time would have been involved in each one, and the amount of time spent in certain places (for example, Luke informs us that Paul spent 18 months in Corinth at the close of his second journey [Acts 18:11] and Paul informs us in Galatians 1:18; 2:1, that three years after his conversion he went from Damascus to Jerusalem and then fourteen years later he and Barnabas went to Jerusalem for a conference).

By coalescing the narrative with such calendar detail, the following approximation is achieved. These dates, presented by J. W. McGarvey,⁴¹ are the generally agreed upon dates, allowing for a year or two variation among scholars.

Saul's conversion 36 AD

Saul's return to Jerusalem after his conversion 39 AD

Barnabas and Saul labor together in Antioch 43 AD

Barnabas and Saul travel to Judea with alms from the Antioch 44 AD

The first missionary journey 44 – 50 AD (the tour probably occupied almost four years)

The Jerusalem conference on circumcision 50 AD

The second missionary journey 50-53 AD (eighteen months in Corinth)

The third missionary tour 53-58 AD

Paul's imprisonment 58-63 AD

⁴¹ McGarvey xxiii-xxiv

Section Four: Outline of the Life of Paul

The following is an adaptation of the outline prepared by Frank J. Goodwin. Although there are some incidental variations from the above dates, they are slight.⁴²

- I. Paul's early life as a Christian**
 - A. Conversion 36 AD
 - B. In Damascus and Arabia 37-39 AD
 - C. Escape from Damascus & First visit to Jerusalem 39 AD
 - D. In Tarsus and surrounding region 39-43 AD (4 – 5 years)
 - E. A year in Antioch with Barnabas 44 AD
 - F. Second journey to Jerusalem with Alms 45 AD
- II. First missionary journey 45-47 AD (2 years)**
- III. In Antioch "a long time" 48-49 AD (2 years)**
- IV. Third visit to Jerusalem: the council 50 AD**
- V. Second missionary journey 51-54 AD (3 years)**
 - A. I Thessalonians written from Corinth 52 AD
 - B. II Thessalonians written from Corinth 53 AD
 - C. Fourth visit to Jerusalem
- VI. Third missionary journey 54-59 AD (4 years)**
 - A. I Corinthians written from Ephesus, spring 57 AD
 - B. II Corinthians written from Macedonia, Autumn 57 AD
 - C. Galatians written from Corinth, winter 57 AD
 - D. Romans written at Corinth, spring 58 AD
- VII. Fifth visit to Jerusalem - the arrest in the Temple 58 AD**
- VIII. Imprisonment at Caesarea 58-60 (2 years)**
- IX. Journey to Rome: Autumn 60 – Spring 61 AD**
- X. First Roman captivity 61-63 AD (2 years)**
 - A. Philemon written 61 or 62 AD
 - B. Colossians written 61 or 62 AD
 - C. Ephesians written 61 or 62 AD
 - D. Philippians written 63 AD
- XI. Years of freedom 63-67 AD (4-5 years)**
 - A. I Timothy written in Macedonia 67 AD
 - B. Titus written in Ephesus 67 AD
- XII. Second Roman imprisonment 68 AD**
 - A. II Timothy written at Rome 68 AD
 - B. Paul's death 68 AD

⁴² Frank J. Goodwin *A Harmony of the Life of St. Paul* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House) 1983, page 7. I altered this outline at certain points, however, it largely reflects the original prepared by Goodwin.

Section Five: First Century Rulers

Roman rulers

Several Roman rulers are mentioned in the New Testament. The following is a catalogue of Caesars who ruled during the First Century AD.

31 BC – 14 AD	Octavian – Caesar Augustus Octavian was the great-nephew and adopted son of Julius Caesar, whom Caesar declared to be his heir. Initially, he found it necessary to rule with two of Caesar’s powerful friends, Mark Antony and Lepidus. Antony became jealous of Octavian and this caused military conflict between the leaders. The matter was resolved 31 BC when Octavian defeated Antony and Cleopatra at the battle of Actium and became the sole ruler of Rome. In 27 BC, the Roman Senate conferred upon him the title of “Augustus.” From that time onward, this was the title by which he was known. Augustus Caesar began the line of rulers who prevailed during the First Century.
14 – 37 AD	Tiberius
37 – 41 AD	Caligula
41 – 54 AD	Claudius
54 – 68 AD	Nero
68 – 69 AD	Galba
69 AD	Otho, Vitellius
69 – 79 AD	Vespasian
79 - 81 AD	Titus
81 – 96 AD	Domitian
96 – 98 AD	Nerva
98 – 117 AD	Trajan

Jewish Palestinian Authority

Palestine was incorporated into the Roman Empire in 63 BC, following Pompey’s occupation of Jerusalem. From that time onward, the Roman Governor of Syria had authority over Palestine. During the New Testament era, Palestine was ruled as a sub/province with various procurators and “kings” ruling the various districts, all answerable to the Governor of Syria, who answered to Caesar. To fully grasp the situation, it is necessary to begin a few years before the birth of Christ. The record is confusing, if one is not acquainted with the personalities involved and their access to the positions that they occupied.

The last surviving son of Matthias (see previous information concerning the Maccabees) was Simon. Simon's son, John Hyrcanus succeeded him as the prince and High Priest in Jerusalem. After a stormy reign of nearly three decades, he died in peace. Knowing his family's traits, just before his death John nominated his wife to become the supreme power, and his son, Aristobulus, his eldest son, to become the High Priest. As soon as Aristobulus became the High Priest he began to seek the role of ruler. He imprisoned his mother and starved her to death. He imprisoned his three younger brothers and had his other brother, Antigonus, murdered. Shortly after this, he died of an intestinal disease.

Aristobulus' childless widow elevated the oldest surviving son of John Hyrcanus, Alexander Jannaeus (her brother-in-law), to the throne and then married him. He began his reign by slaying one of his brothers, allied himself with the Sadducees, and crushed the Pharisees in a torrent of blood. He killed 50,000 of his own people, in the internecine war that followed. He ruled by brute force and even though suffering from an incurable form of quartan fever, he waged war to the last and died during the siege of Ragaba.

On his deathbed, he urged his wife to cast herself on the mercy of the Pharisees. This was wise counsel. She was permitted to retain the crown and place her son, Hyrcanus II, in the High Priestly office. She ruled as monarch for nine years. When she died, another of her sons, Aristobulus, aspired to the crown and another internecine war erupted and Aristobulus was victorious.

It is at this point that the Herodian family entered the picture. The Herods were not of Jewish stock, but were Idumean. Idumeans had been conquered by John Hyrcanus in 125 BC and were forcefully circumcised, in order to make them citizens of the kingdom. The family had its beginning with Antipas who was appointed governor of Idumea by Alexander Jannaeus (see above). Antipas was succeeded by his son, Antipater, who was a very wily politician. He recognized two things: the unconquerable power of Rome and the pitiful weakness of the Maccabean house (also known as Asmoneans).

Antipater saw that his best opportunity was to ally with Hyrcanus II, and to assist him in opposing his brother, Aristobulus. Antipater persuaded Hyrcanus II to seek the aid of the Romans. Hyrcanus supported the claims of Pompey, but after Pompey's defeat, Hyrcanus and Antipater cleverly changed sides and were able to persuade Caesar to give Antipater the Procuratorship of Judea (47 BC), while his innocent dupe, Hyrcanus II had to content himself with the High Priesthood.

Antipater died at the hands of an assassin in 43 BC and left five children:

- Phasaël,
- Herod the Great,
- Joseph,
- Pheroras,
- a daughter, Salome.

Herod the Great became the family star, and had to contend with all sorts of family quarrels between his siblings. He was a very gifted man. He rid the area of dangerous brigands, but most importantly, he proved to be very successful in raising tribute-money for Rome. As a result he was appointed "tetrarch" of Judea in 41 BC. He married Mariamne, the daughter of Simon Maccabee, who also was the sister of Hyrcanus II, Aristobulus, and Antigonus. While on an

official visit to Rome, he charmed Antony and Octavia (while both still were ruling Rome) and as a result was given the desire of his heart – the title of “king of Judea.”

Herod returned to Judea to find that the Asmoneans had been successful in retaking much of the region. Antigonus, one of the surviving Asmoneans (a brother to Hyrcanus II) had taken Jerusalem by storm and imprisoned Herod’s brother Phasaël, who killed himself in prison by dashing out his brains against the prison wall. Antigonus wanted all power, and so he cut off the ears of his brother, Hyrcanus II, so that he no longer could be High Priest.

Herod quickly gathered an army and proved himself to be a very capable military leader. He cut his way back to Jerusalem and took it in 37 AD. Antigonus was killed in the battle. Herod made his brother-in-law, Aristobulus, the High Priest, but before long, Herod began to be suspicious of Aristobulus and not long after, he was killed.

When Octavian defeated Anthony in 31 BC, Herod quickly threw in his lot with the victor. As a result, the borders of his realm were greatly expanded. He defeated the Arabians and all other contenders.

His wife, Mariamne, was a grandchild of Hyrcanus, thus, Herod was related by marriage to the Asmoneans. Fearful of leaving any remnant of the Asmoneans alive, Herod executed his wife, the only person he seems to have loved (28 BC), his mother-in-law, Alexandria, and his sons by Mariamne, Alexander II and Aristobulus II (7 BC). Herod did all that he could to turn Palestine into a Roman culture. Shortly before his death, he executed his son, Antipater II and ordered that after his death a number of Jewish nobles, whom he had confined to the hippodrome, were to be executed.

By far, the greatest achievements of Herod were in architecture. He rebuilt the Temple of Zerubbabel and made it more resplendent than Solomon’s. Throughout present day Palestine examples of the architectural genius of Herod can be seen.

Herod’s death is the key to determining the year of Christ’s birth. Josephus mentions an eclipse, which happened shortly before Herod’s death. This particular eclipse occurred March 13, 4 BC. Thus, Herod died in 4 BC. Since some time passed between the massacre of the children in Bethlehem and the death of Herod (Matthew 2:19), Jesus was born 4-5 BC.

Herod left a will in which he assigned to his heirs various portions of his kingdom. Rome honored this will. Herod left four sons of whom some history remains (no significant record is left of a fifth son).

- **Herod Antipas**, the son of Herod and Malthace, a Samaritan woman (Herod Antipas had not a drop of Jewish blood). In compliance with Herod the Great’s will, Antipas was given the tetrarchy of Galilee and Perea. He had his father’s flair for architecture and constructed a number of significant edifices throughout his realm.

Herod Antipas was educated at Rome, with his two brothers. His wife was the daughter of Aretas, King of Arabia. While he and his brothers were in Rome, he seduced his brother’s wife, Herodias. He sent his wife back to her father in Petra and took Herodias back to Palestine. Herodias not only was his brother’s wife, she also was his niece (the daughter of his half-brother, Aristobulus). Thus, the union between the two was doubly sinful. Herodias was a bad influence on Herod. Being a very strong woman, she

dominated him. John the Baptist was imprisoned and beheaded because he spoke out against their sinful and illegal union

- **Herod Archelaus** also was the son of Herod the Great and Malthace, the Samaritan (Archelaus was older than Herod Antipas). He was a man of violent temper. Like his father, he also was a great builder of architecture. His father's will bestowed on him the greater amount of the Herodian Kingdom, and with it, the title of "ethnarch."

He ruled with an iron hand. Even though Judah and Samaria hated each other, they came to hate Archelaus more. They sent a combined embassy to Rome to protest about Archelaus' rule and the constant unrest that resulted. Caesar heard their protest and as a result all of Archelaus' government was taken from him, his personal possessions were confiscated by Rome and he was banished to Vienna in Gaul. The only mention of Archelaus in Scripture is in Matthew 2:22.

- **Herod Philip** was the daughter of Herod the Great and Cleopatra of Jerusalem. He inherited Gaulonitis, Trachonitis, and Paneas. He was utterly unlike the rest of the family. He was retiring, dignified, moderate and just. He was free from intrigue. He died in 34 AD, and his territory, plus the tetrarch of Lysanias, was given to Agrippa I, his nephew. He is not mentioned in Scripture.
- **Herod, son of Herod the Great and Mariamne**, Simon's daughter. This Herod was the only surviving son of Mariamne. He married Herodias, the daughter of his half-brother Aristobulus – the Herodias seduced by Herod Antipas. He is known as Philip in the New Testament – which causes confusion because, as already noted, the youngest son of Herod the Great and Cleopatra of Jerusalem also is named, "Philip" (evidently, one could use the same name for children by different wives). Nothing is known of his later history.

Herod Agrippa I, was the son of Aristobulus and Bernice, and the grandson of Herod the Great and Mariamne. As with all of the Herods, he was a masterful politician. He always ingratiated himself with those who ultimately would improve his lot. He was educated in Rome with young men who would become future emperors. He knew the right people. In his lifetime, by stages, he became King of the tetrarchies of Philip (see above), plus Lysanias, Galilee and Perea, with Judea and Samaria being added to his realm in 40 AD. He died in 44 AD.

Herod Agrippa I was a bitter persecutor of Christians. He beheaded James and harassed the Church whenever possible (Acts 12). His horrible death is described in Acts 12:20-23. He left three children: Agrippa II, Bernice, and Drusilla, the wife of the Roman governor, Felix (Acts 24:24). Agrippa II and his sister, Bernice, lived as husband and wife. Because this consorting was in defiance of both human and Divine Law, her name became a byword even among the heathen.

Agrippa II was the son of Herod Agrippa I and Cypros. Since Agrippa II was only 17 years old when his father died, Caesar Claudius placed the realm under a procurator. On the death of his uncle, Herod of Calchis, he was made tetrarch of that territory, with the title of king. Caesar Claudius later (52 AD) gave him the old tetrarchies of Philip and Lysanias. Later, Nero added cities in Samaria and Perea to his domain. The Agrippas were Jews and Agrippa II spent his governmental life trying to improve the lot of his countrymen, until the final downfall of Judea. Agrippa II appears in Scripture in Acts 25:13 and 26:32.

When the Romans came against the Jews, Agrippa knew the futility of resisting. Hoping to prevent slaughter he warned the nation to not rebel, but his plea was in vain. His oration, attempting to persuade the Jews against rebellion, is an oratorical classic. In the ensuing battle, he fought under the Roman banner and was wounded by a sling-stone at the battle of Gamala. After the 70 AD destruction of Jerusalem, Agrippa and Bernice were removed to Rome where he became a *praetor* and died in 100 AD, at the beginning of Trajan's reign.

Roman Palestinian Authority

After the death of Herod the Great, Palestine became a sub-province and was placed under the authority of the Roman Governor of Syria. Quirinius was the Governor of Syria when Jesus was born, (Luke 2:1-5).⁴³ Palestine was governed by the Herods who theoretically were subject to the Governor of Syria.

There also was an official Roman presence in each province. The Roman representatives were *procurators*. Originally, the term referred to those who were a steward or bailiff of a private estate. In time, the term came to be used for governmental positions that were of the same nature, only the stewardship was of Caesar's empire. The administration of the imperial treasury at Rome (*fiscus*) and of the finances in the imperial provinces, as well as the collection of revenues in the provinces were in the hands of procurators. The main task of the procurator was to oversee the collection of taxes and to put down any rebellion or any disturbance that would interfere with the collection of taxes.

First Century Roman Procurators of Judea

Coponius (6 AD – c10 AD)	C. Cuspius Fadus (44 – 46)
M. Ambibulus (c10 – 13)	Tiberius Alexander (46 – 48)
Annius Rufus (c13 – 15)	Ventidius Cumanus (48 – 52)
Valerius Gratus (c15 – 26)	M. Antonius Felix (52 -60 or 61) ⁴⁴
Pontus Pilatus (26 – 35)	Portius Festus (61)
Marcellus (probably 35 – 38)	Albinus (62 – 64)
Maryllus (38 – 44)	Gessius Florus (65 – 66)

⁴³ For many years, those who challenged the veracity of Scripture argued that Luke's account of the birth of Christ could not be factual because of a discrepancy about the enrollment enacted by Quirinius. This was a census taken of the Roman Empire. Roman historical records place the Enrolment of Quirinius in 7 AD, which was 10 – 12 years after the birth of Christ. In recent years, ancient papyri have been found which indicate that Quirinius was governor of Syria twice. This is in keeping with Luke's statement that the enrollment which he reported was the "first enrollment," when Quirinius was governor of Syria. These later records also indicate that people were required to go to their ancestral homes for the census.

⁴⁴ Felix, before whom Paul appeared (Acts 21:31 – 23:34), was a man who did not hesitate to employ any means available to further his own fortune. He did not hesitate to employ the *sicarii* (hired assassins). His cruelty and rapacity knew no bounds. Revolts were continuous during his tenure. Jewish resentment under his rule launched the season that ultimately led to the Jewish revolt that led to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

PAUL: HIS LIFE AND MINISTRY

The Saga Begins: Saul and Stephen

Acts 6-7

The biblical incident that first introduces us to Saul/Paul (Acts 7:54-60), began with the ordination of the first deacons in the Jerusalem Church (Acts 6). Jews from many nations were present in Jerusalem on Pentecost, 30 AD. They had traveled to the city to celebrate the holy day. When the Holy Spirit fell on the disciples and the resulting phenomena climaxed with Peter's preaching the first Gospel sermon of the Church age (Acts 2), his audience consisted of this mixture of Palestinian and non-Palestinian Jews (Acts 2:9-10).

The Jews who had come from other nations were Greek-speaking Jews (Hellenistic Jews). In addition to the visitors, there were Hellenistic Jews from other nations who had taken up residence in Jerusalem. Both Palestinian (Aramaic speaking) and Hellenistic Jews constituted the three thousand who were baptized into Christ on that Pentecost Sunday.

Many of the non-Palestinian Jews chose to remain in Jerusalem in order to be a part of the Church. Since they did not have a means of income in Jerusalem, and their sole source of finances consisted of the funds that they had brought with them for the trip back home, they quickly faced financial difficulty. Led by the Holy Spirit, the Church began to practice a communal existence in order to provide for those who had no income or permanent lodging. Although the record does not reveal the details of how the provision was administered, widows and others in need received a daily food ration from the communal storehouse.

Not many months passed before the Jerusalem Church had grown to several thousand souls. The management of food distribution had become a major undertaking. The task had become too big for the apostles to oversee, along with their other responsibilities. When the distribution was not overseen well, and some seemed to get a larger ration than others, it is not surprising that ethnic suspicion raised its ugly head. The apostles did not deny the charge that the distribution of food was not being done in an equitable manner (Acts 6:1-4). Instead of defending themselves, they tacitly admitted their inability to do this work well, and presented a solution.

*Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word. 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.*⁴⁵

All of the seven men picked by the congregation were Hellenistic Jews (every man chosen had a Greek name). This clearly was an effort on the part of the church to dispel any suspicion of ethnic prejudice in the food distribution.

⁴⁵ Acts 6:3-5

One of these men was Stephen, who seems to have had connections with an Hellenistic synagogue. It is evident in the early chapters of Acts that the Jerusalem Christians continued in their Jewish connections – attending Temple services, etc. Evidently, Stephen had continued attending his Hellenistic synagogue, the Synagogue of Freedmen, where he performed wonders and signs, and preached the Gospel. Some members of the synagogue began to argue with Stephen. When they could not refute his words nor the miracles, they decided to attack the messenger. They bribed unscrupulous individuals to begin to spread a false report about Stephen – accusing him of speaking blasphemous words against Moses and God. Note the order of words – first Moses, then God. This says something about the nature of their values.

These rabble rousers stirred up a crowd who grabbed Stephen and dragged him before the Sanhedrin. These men and others whom they induced to put their prejudiced spin on Stephen's words, made accusation against Stephen. The formal charge was that he was blaspheming the Temple, by declaring that Jesus had said that it would be torn down and the Mosaic customs changed. When the Sanhedrin looked at Stephen, they "saw his face like the face of an angel."

The High Priest asked Stephen if the accusations were true. In his defense, Stephen presented a marvelous summary of God's redemptive history and Israel's frequent apostasy.⁴⁶ In his conclusion, Stephen indicted his hearers,

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?
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."⁴⁷*

This accusation enraged the council and even though they began to snarl, Stephen was given a vision which imparted to him perfect peace. He described the vision,

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."⁴⁸

The audience was so enraged that they covered their ears so that they couldn't hear these terrible words. In a herd-like impulse, they rushed upon Stephen, pushed him before the mob out of the city gates and began stoning him. The penalty for blaspheming the Temple was death by stoning.⁴⁹ According to Josephus, when Judea became a Roman province in 6 AD, the Jewish administration was deprived of the right to capital

⁴⁶ Stephen quoted the Septuagint Version of the Old Testament Scriptures. His scriptural knowledge was thorough. Luke's record of Stephen's sermon is one of the most complete sermonic records in the New Testament.

⁴⁷ Acts 7:51-53

⁴⁸ Acts 7:55-56

⁴⁹ Cf. Leviticus 24:10-16

punishment.⁵⁰ Only the Roman prefect could execute anyone. The one exception was the fate of those found guilty of violating the Temple. When the Temple was violated by word or action, the Jews were given vague authority to execute their own law.⁵¹

It is possible that the council reacted so strongly to Stephen's words because of his accusations against them. They realized that he was threatening their position. On the other hand, some of Stephen's audience could have been motivated by the certainty that they were doing the will of God. The Pharisees had committed themselves to preserving Judaism, in the face of much opposition. They would not brook any compromise. The words of Deuteronomy could have been ringing in their ears

If your brother, your mother's son, or your son or daughter, or the wife you cherish, or your friend who is as your own soul, entice you secretly, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods' (whom neither you nor your fathers have known, of the gods of the peoples who are around you, near you or far from you, from one end of the earth to the other end), you shall not yield to him or listen to him; and your eye shall not pity him, nor shall you spare or conceal him. But you shall surely kill him...⁵²;

If there is found in your midst, in any of your towns, which Jehovah your God is giving you, a man or a woman who does what is evil in the sight of Jehovah your God, by transgressing His covenant, and has gone and served other gods and worshiped them, or the sun or the moon or any of the heavenly host, which I have not commanded, and if it is told you and you have heard of it, then you shall inquire thoroughly. Behold, if it is true and the thing certain that this detestable thing has been done in Israel, then you shall bring out that man or that woman who has done this evil deed to your gates, that is, the man or the woman, and you shall stone them to death. On the evidence of two witnesses or three witnesses, he who is to die shall be put to death; he shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness.⁵³

To them, Stephen was enticing them away from Jehovah, as they understood Him. The condition of three or more witnesses had been met. Therefore, they were obeying Jehovah by immediately stoning him.

Today, society hires executioners. Even those who are the strongest supporters of the death penalty and those who have been victimized by capitol crime do not pull the lever on the electric chair, nor drop the pellet into the gas chamber, nor begin the flow of chemicals into the veins of one being executed by injection. In the Mosaic Law, it was not so. Those who testified that the

⁵⁰ Josephus, *BJ* ii 117; cf. *Antiquities* xviii 2; John 18:31 – The Jewish leaders wanted the Romans to bear the responsibility for the execution of Jesus. Crucifixion, which the Jews were forbidden to use as a means of execution, held special shame.

⁵¹ Cf. Josephus, *BJ* vi. 126

⁵² Deuteronomy 13:6-9a

⁵³ Deuteronomy 17:2-6

offender had committed the offense had to cast the first stones. Then, the entire company joined in the execution.

*The hand of the witnesses shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.*⁵⁴

*...your hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. So you shall stone him to death because he has sought to seduce you from Jehovah your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.*⁵⁵

This, of course, was protection against frivolous accusation. The first deterrent was the requirement that two or three witnesses had to verify the charge. The second deterrent was the requirement that these witnesses had to look the accused in the eye and hurl a rock at him, thus launching the execution. Once it was begun, it could not be stopped. Being aware of the inevitable chain of events - that if the accused were found guilty that obedience to God demanded the death penalty, and that the accusers would have to be the executioner - was a deterrent to irresponsible charges.

It is at this point that we first meet Saul.

*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.*⁵⁶

Years later, Paul said that when Christians were being examined before Jewish authorities, he always voted for the death penalty.⁵⁷ In essence, that is what he did on this occasion. By holding the robes of those who were stoning Stephen, Saul gave tacit approval to Stephen's execution.

We cannot avoid speculating about this scene's impact on Saul. As we observe the intensity of Saul's efforts to obliterate followers of Jesus, we wonder whether or not he was running from his conscience. Did the mental picture of Stephen's beatific face, framed by the angry faces of the snarling mob haunt this young Pharisee? Human nature expresses itself by extreme action against something to which we are vulnerable – whether truth or enticement. Extremism drowns out the threatening voice. Was it so with Saul?

Stephen, the first believer to die because of his faith and loyalty to Christ, died with words that echoed those of Jesus on the cross,⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Deuteronomy 17:7

⁵⁵ Deuteronomy 13:9c-10

⁵⁶ Acts 7:58

⁵⁷ Acts 22:4; 26:10

⁵⁸ Luke 23:34, 46 *But Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." Having said this, He breathed His last.*

They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" Having said this, he fell asleep.⁵⁹

Stephen had presented an accurate picture of Israel's incessant apostasy. The nation consistently had forsaken the God of the Universe, who repeatedly had forgiven them and blessed them anew. When Jehovah sent messengers to call them back to Him, they usually were ignored, but sometimes they were punished and killed.

We are reminded of an incident that took place in Judah, during the reign of Joash. Joash became king when he was seven years old and in his early years served under the care of a faithful High Priest, Jehoiada. Jehoiada cared for him like a son. Joash was a very godly king as long as Jehoiada lived. After Jehoiada died he came under the influence of ungodly governmental officials. Under their influence, Joash led the nation away from the Temple and instituted idol worship in various venues. God sent prophets to Judah to bring them back to the true God, but they refused. The Spirit of God came upon Zechariah, one of Jehoiada's sons who was both priest and prophet. He brought a message very similar to that of Stephen. This angered Joash and his cohorts and so they stoned him to death in the Temple court (Our Lord mentioned this incident when indicting the Pharisees for their hypocrisy⁶⁰). As Zechariah died, he cried out, *May Jehovah see and avenge!*⁶¹

Stephen led the parade of martyrs that continues to march onward, ever growing, even in our present era. We cannot avoid recalling the scene in Revelation that followed the breaking of the fifth seal of the heavenly scroll.

When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.⁶²

Because martyrdom is so much a part of the present day experience of the Church, we assume that all who have been ordained to die for Jesus have not as yet been slain.

⁵⁹ Acts 7:59-60

⁶⁰ Luke 11:47-51

⁶¹ II Chronicles 24:22

⁶² Revelation 6:9-11

The deaths of Stephen and Zechariah were very similar, but their dying words were very different. The closing remarks of Stephen's sermon do not echo the words of Zechariah, but instead, the words of Jesus,

*Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling.*⁶³

No unbiased listener could have denied Stephen's summary. However, rather than face the truth, the members of the council and the audience, feeling threatened by this young orator, silenced him.

Organized Persecution of the Church Begins

Acts 8:1-4

*Saul was in hearty agreement⁶⁴ with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles...*⁶⁵

*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.*⁶⁶

While everyone else was either fleeing the city, or being arrested, the apostles did not flee. For some reason, Saul seems to have exempted the apostles from his harassment. This situation poses two questions: (1) Why didn't the apostles feel threatened; (2) why did Saul leave them alone? Neither of these questions can be answered with certainty, but we can consider strong probabilities.

In answer to both questions, some scholars, notably F. F. Bruce, argue that the focus of the persecution was the Hellenistic element in the Church.⁶⁷ This argument is based upon the following considerations:

- Stephen was an Hellenistic Jew
- the charges against Stephen had been leveled by an Hellenistic synagogue
- most of the sites mentioned to which the refugees fled were Hellenistic communities
- the Jerusalem Church seemed to have become more Jewish after this persecution (the Hellenists were driven out of the city)

⁶³ Matthew 23:37

⁶⁴ The KJV renders this term, *consenting*, which fails to communicate the full sense of the Greek. The Greek, ἦν συνευδοκῶν, is periphrastic imperfect, indicating that Saul gave his approval with pleasure.

⁶⁵ Acts 8:1-2

⁶⁶ Acts 8:3-4

⁶⁷ F.F. Bruce, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament, The Book of Acts*, (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1988, pages 162-163, 224-225; Bruce, *Paul, the Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1977 pages 71-72

Even though we must respect the great scholarship of Bruce, his arguments seem weak on this point. It requires considerable reading between the lines to arrive at this conclusion. Luke makes no such distinction, stating that *they were all scattered...*⁶⁸

It is possible that Saul and the Jewish authorities did not want to make martyrs out of the Twelve, because they were very popular with the people. The chapters of Acts immediately preceding the Stephen episode describe how miracles done at the hands of the Apostles resulted in huge support for them among the population of Jerusalem – both Christian and non-Christian. Because of this, the Jewish authorities were checked in their efforts to silence the Twelve.

*When they had threatened them further, they let them go (finding no basis on which to punish them) on account of the people, because they were all glorifying God for what had happened; (the healing of the lame man at the gate called, Beautiful – Acts 3)*⁶⁹

*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.,*⁷⁰

*But someone came and reported to them, "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, that they might be stoned).*⁷¹

We would postulate that this popularity must have prevailed through the post-Stephen episode and the efforts to eradicate the Church.

Also of note is the fact that each time the Apostles had been arrested, no genuine charges could be lodged against them.⁷² They continued to follow all of the Mosaic Law, as well as participate in the religious services of Judaism. They were as flawless in their Jewish orthodoxy as was Saul.

Curiously, the populace, both Christian and non-Christian, viewed the Apostles with special reverence – as being somewhat apart from the believers (Acts 5:12-13a cited above).

One also has to wonder if Gamaliel's advice (given immediately before the Stephen episode and heeded by the Sanhedrin), influenced how the Jewish establishment related to the Twelve.⁷³

Of course, behind all of this is the sovereignty of God.

Why the Twelve did not leave Jerusalem, is another matter. We assume that they considered their remaining in Jerusalem to be a point of obedience to God, and lack of fear of man. As yet, the commission of Acts 1:8-9 had not dawned on them. They continued in the spirit of their reply to the Sanhedrin,

⁶⁸ Acts 8:1

⁶⁹ Acts 4:21

⁷⁰ Acts 5:12-13

⁷¹ Acts 5:25-26

⁷² Acts 4:21, *et.al.*

⁷³ Acts 5:33-42

[the High Priest] saying, "We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man's blood upon us." But Peter and the apostles answered, "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."⁷⁴

*they flogged them and ordered them not to speak 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.*⁷⁵

Saul's purpose was to exterminate the Church. He did his work well in Jerusalem. Christians either fled the city, or went to prison. As Paul later testified, when the sentence was being considered, he always voted for the death penalty.⁷⁶ However, his intense and thorough efforts had a result that he did not anticipate. Those who fled the city, rather than face Saul and his thugs, took the Gospel to many regions, including non-Jewish regions in Samaria.⁷⁷ This was the beginning of the fulfillment of Jesus' commission to the Eleven,

*but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.*⁷⁸

Saul's Conversion

Acts 9:1-30

Acts 9:1-9

Saul's zeal knew no bounds. Even though the persecution in Jerusalem had achieved a high level of success, Saul still was *breathing out threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord*. He decided to enlarge his pogrom to include cities outside of the environs of Jerusalem. We once again face a question that cannot be answered with certainty, "Why did Saul choose Damascus as his next theatre of operation?" We don't have a clue. He must have received a report that some Christian fugitives from Jerusalem had taken refuge in this ancient Syrian city, but surely he knew of refugees in cities that were closer to Jerusalem. For whatever reason,

⁷⁴ Acts 5:28-32

⁷⁵ Acts 5:40-42

⁷⁶ *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)

⁷⁷ The prime example is Philip, the Jerusalem deacon, Acts 8:5ff

⁷⁸ Acts 1:8

fugitives in Damascus became his next target. He went to the High Priest and asked *for himself*⁷⁹ letters written to the synagogues of Damascus, authorizing him to arrest Christians and bring them bound back to Jerusalem – where they would have been imprisoned or executed.

Acts 9:2 is the first occurrence of the term “followers of the Way,” as a label for Christians. This had become the common name for believers,⁸⁰ probably derived from Jesus’ statement, *I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.*⁸¹

Damascus was 140 miles to the northeast of Jerusalem, in the province of Syria. It was a seven-day trek from Jerusalem to Damascus. A number of classical paintings picture Saul falling from a horse, when the Lord appeared to him. These paintings are more a reflection of the mode of travel in the lifetime of the artist than that of biblical times. No passage of scripture ever mentions Saul on a horse, and it would have been quite unusual for him to have traveled by any other means than walking.

THE PURPOSES OF GOD

We pause to note that God did not interfere with Saul’s murderous activity in Jerusalem, yet He arrested him before he could carry out his mission in Damascus. Here again, we see the Hand of God and His eternal values.

- If the Hellenistic Jewish Christians in Jerusalem had not suspected that their widows were being neglected in the daily administration of food, then Stephen would not have been made a deacon.
- If Stephen had not been made a deacon, no hands would have been laid on him, he probably would not have been known for working miracles and he probably would not have been an exuberant preacher in an Hellenistic synagogue.
- If he had not stirred up the Synagogue of Freedmen, no false charges would have been brought against him and he would not have been martyred.
- If he had not been martyred, and displayed such a beatific countenance, along with prayers of forgiveness for his murderers, Saul of Tarsus would not have been launched upon his crusade of persecution.
- If Saul had not launched the persecution, the fleeing Christians would not have taken the Gospel to many cities and provinces – ultimately preaching to the Gentiles in Antioch.
- It was not until these results had obtained, that Jesus confronted Saul, and halted his persecution of the Church.

About ten miles before Saul and his contingent of Jewish Temple police reached Damascus, they passed the spot where, according to the tradition of that era, Cain murdered Abel. It could have been at this spot, or a little further in the journey that Jesus appeared to the persecutor. Luke gives three reports of this event. The first one is the narrative of the event, and the other two are Paul’s description of the event when he was making a defense before rulers.

⁷⁹ ἑτήσαατο middle voice, indicating that it is something that the speaker did to himself, thus, *asked for himself*

⁸⁰ Acts 9:2; 18:25f; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14,22.

⁸¹ John 14:6

Acts 9:3-9	Acts 22:6-11	Acts 26:12-18
<p><i>As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him;</i></p> <p><i>and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"</i></p> <p><i>And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting,</i></p> <p><i>The men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one.</i></p> <p><i>but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do."</i></p> <p><i>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.</i></p>	<p><i>But it happened that as I was on my way, approaching Damascus about noontime, a very bright light suddenly flashed from heaven all around me,</i></p> <p><i>and I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?'</i></p> <p><i>And I answered, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said to me, 'I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are persecuting.'</i></p> <p><i>And those who were with me saw the light, to be sure, but did not understand the voice of the One who was speaking to me.</i></p> <p><i>And I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?'</i></p> <p><i>And the Lord said to me, 'Get up and go on into Damascus, and there you will be told of all that has been appointed for you to do.'</i></p> <p><i>"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.</i></p>	<p><i>While so 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.</i></p> <p><i>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.'</i></p> <p><i>And I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.'</i></p> <p><i>But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; rescuing 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, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.'</i></p>

Harmonizing the Accounts

As we harmonize these accounts, the full picture of the event is as follows:

At around noon, Saul and his party approached Damascus. Suddenly, without any warning, a very bright light from heaven, brighter than the Syrian sun, engulfed the party.

The entire company fell to the ground. A voice spoke, saying to Saul in Aramaic, *Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?*

Although the entire company saw the light and heard the voice, the message was articulated only to Saul. Furthermore, only Saul, saw anyone in the light. We know that Saul saw someone because of comments that he made later. When defending himself before Agrippa, and describing the incident, he spoke of the *heavenly vision*.⁸²

When Ananias was sent by God to minister to Saul, he commented on what Saul had just experienced,

*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.'*⁸³

That this was not just a mental picture, is attested to by Paul's defense of his apostleship by declaring that he, like the original Twelve, had seen the glorified Lord.

*Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? **Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?** Are you not my work in the Lord?*⁸⁴

If Saul had only experienced some sort of a mental picture, he would not have been qualified as an apostle, to the same degree as were the Twelve.

When the voice said, *Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me*, Saul asked the glorified being to identify Himself and Jesus replied, *...I am Jesus the Nazarene Whom you are persecuting*.

The personal pronoun, *Me*, is very telling. Our Lord identifies Himself with His Church. What is done to His Church is done to Him. This is consistent with language throughout the New Testament. It is somewhat significant that Paul, who had this vision and heard these words from Jesus, years later wrote to the Corinthians,

*For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free...*⁸⁵

So also is Christ... The apostle, who in earlier life had been a persecutor of the Church, never forgot that the Church is the Body of Christ. Paul knew that just as much as his own body was the body of Paul, so the Church is the Body of Christ. This is a truth that many never comprehend and that all are prone to forget.

Jesus closed his revelation by stating, *It is hard for you to kick against the goads*.

Much debate has ensued over the meaning of this proverb from agricultural life. Both Augustine and Luther had gone through tremendous angst prior to their spiritual rebirth. Therefore, they both considered these words of Jesus to refer to the spiritual disturbance that Saul had been

⁸² Acts 26:19

⁸³ Act 22:14

⁸⁴ I Corinthians 9:1

⁸⁵ I Corinthians 12:12-13

experiencing, since the death of Stephen. This has been the traditional understanding of Jesus' comment. J. W. Shepherd describes the scene with this understanding.

“In his journeying through a desert way, Saul had much leisure to think. He had been in a disturbed state of mind though he thought “he was doing God service in extinguishing this conflagration of heresy this conflagration of heresy in Jerusalem and the regions round about.” Seven days of reflection upon the bloody scene of Stephen's martyrdom, followed by a succession of other similar scenes, brought no rest to his soul. The warning by Gamaliel, his beloved teacher, to the Saddusaic leaders, to wisely leave the Apostles alone “lest they be found fighting against God” also had sunk into his zealous but now reflecting soul. And he could find no explanation for the angelic light on the face of Stephen, when that witness spoke to the Sanhedrin, nor for the prayer he uttered for his enemies while they were stoning him. Many other Christians had followed in the same kind of example with the inexplicable serenity, courage, and utter fearless devotion to their Nazarene leader. The arguments of Stephen in proof of the messiahship of Jesus yet rang in the ears of the persecutor. As he went further in the journey, his thoughts were ever more gloomy and his heart more deeply disturbed.⁸⁶

In opposition to this view, F. F. Bruce argues,

“But there is no hint, either in Acts or in Paul's letters, that before his conversion he was subject to any such inward conflict. His repeated claim in his apologetic speeches to have maintained a clear conscience all of his life (23:1; 24:16) is confirmed by the evidence of his letters. Paul enjoyed a robust conscience up to the moment of his confrontation with the Lord on the Damascus road he regarded his persecuting campaign as a service acceptable to God, and at the height his apostolic career he could say that (subject to the judgment of the Lord, with whom the last word lay) he was not aware of anything against himself (I Cor. 4:4).But if Paul's conversion was preceded by as period of subconscious incubation, it has left no trace in our surviving records (no light is shed on such a period by Romans 7:7-25). The “goads” against which he was now told it was fruitless for him to kick were not the prickings of a disturbed conscience but the new forces which were now impelling him in the opposite direction to that which he had hitherto pursued, the new “necessity” which was henceforth laid upon him (I Cor. 9:16).⁸⁷

Bruce is correct in stating that there is no hint, in any biblical record, of Saul's having had a troubled mind, resulting from his reflecting on all that had happened since the murder of Stephen. However, Bruce's argument that the goads referred to new forces that were “now impelling him in the opposite direction, seems a bit stretched; the new forces as yet had not been applied. At this point, Saul still was asking, *Who are you Lord?* He was not kicking against the goad of the truth about Christ, because he did not know this truth when Jesus spoke of the goads.

⁸⁶ J.W.Shepherd, *The Life and Letters of the Apostle Paul* (Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1950 page 62

⁸⁷ Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, page 466

The traditional meaning, i.e., the influence of what he had experienced through Stephen, makes the most sense.

As the truth of Jesus' identity and the horror of what he had been doing suddenly became apparent to Saul, he, like the converts on the Day of Pentecost,⁸⁸ cried out, *What shall I do, Lord?*

Jesus told Saul to go on into Damascus, and there he would be told what to do. This illustrates a New Testament principle that is modeled consistently: God never substitutes visions or angelic beings for human Gospel messengers. Visions, as are reported currently among Muslims, may bring one to the reality of Jesus' divinity, but it is left to God's human agents to tell these new believers what to do in order to be saved.

The first occurrence of Saul's commission

In addition to the revelation of His identity, Jesus told Saul why he had been honored with the heavenly vision. This is the first time that Saul heard the commission to his future apostolic ministry. The explanation contained four elements:

- Saul was to be a witness to what had just been revealed to him
- He was to be a witness to future revelation that Jesus would give to him
- Jesus would rescue him from both Jews and Gentiles.
- He was being sent as a messenger to the Gentiles so that they might turn from darkness to light, from the dominion of Satan to God, and receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among the saints.

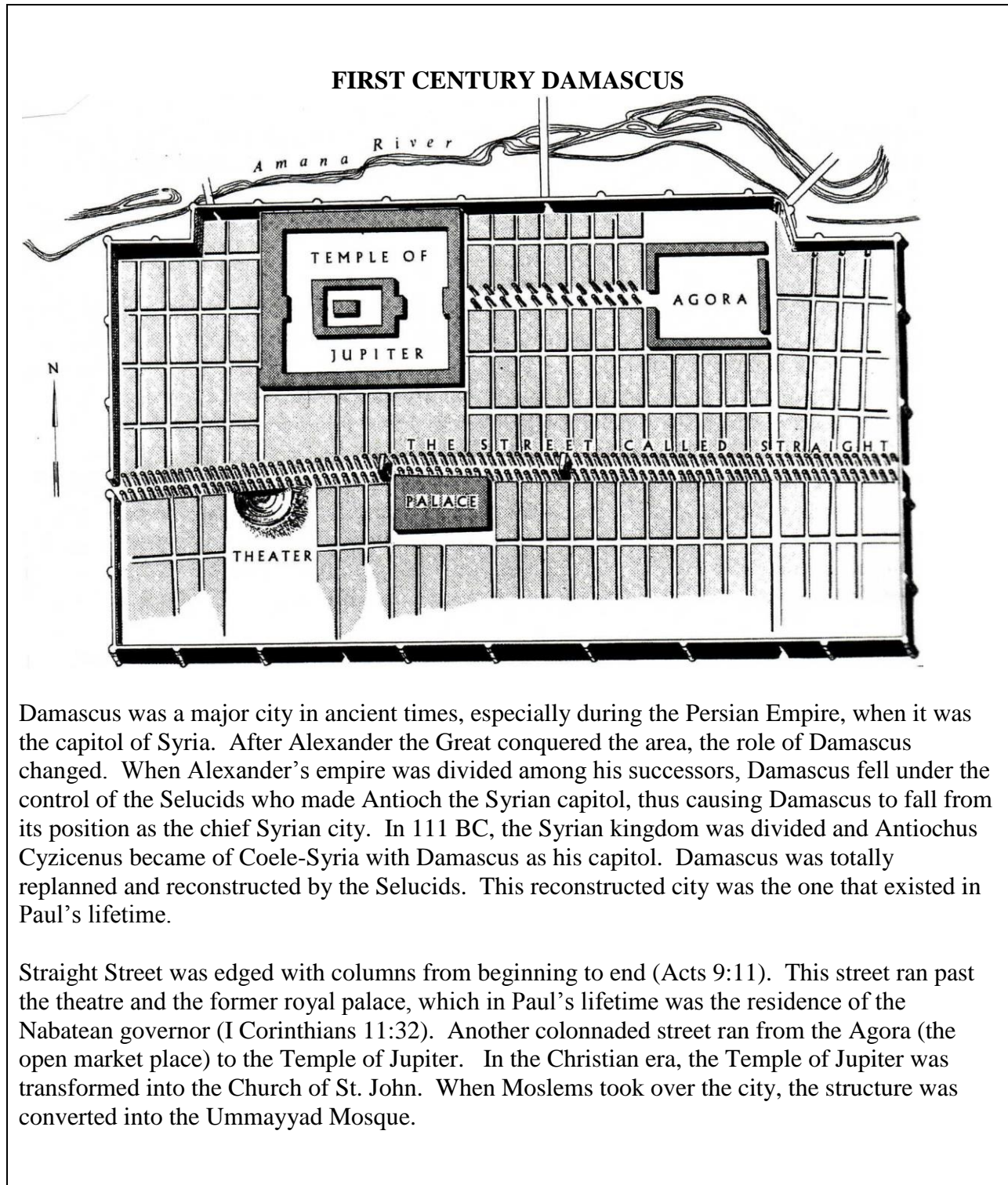
Saul, blinded by the light - into which he alone, among the group seemed to have peered – had to be led by the hand into Damascus. Upon arrival, he spent three days in blindness and participated in a total fast – waiting.

Acts 9:10-19

The following page contains the harmony of the unfolding of Paul's experience, after he entered Damascus. As with the earlier harmony, the first account is Luke's narrative and the next two are Paul's two reports, given when he was on trial.

⁸⁸ Acts 2:37

Acts 9:10-19	Acts 22:12-16	Acts 26:19-20
<p><i>Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias;</i></p> <p><i>and the Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." And the Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying, 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." But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to Your saints at Jerusalem; and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your 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."</i></p> <p><i>So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight,</i></p> <p><i>and he got up and was baptized; and he took food and was strengthened. Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus,</i></p>	<p><i>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,</i></p> <p><i>came to me, and standing near said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight!' And at that very time I looked up at him.</i></p> <p><i>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.</i></p> <p><i>'Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.'</i></p>	<p><i>So, 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</i></p>



Harmonizing the Accounts

As we harmonize the three accounts, the following picture emerges.

A Christian, named Ananias, lived in Damascus. In addition to being a follower of Jesus Christ, he was very devout in keeping the conditions of the Mosaic Law, and as a result, all of the Jews of Damascus held him in high regard.

In the third day of Saul's fast, the Lord appeared in a vision to Ananias, instructing him to go to the house of a man named, Judas, who lived on Straight Street (see map). When he arrived at the house, he was to ask to see a man named, Saul, whose hometown was Tarsus. The Lord told Ananias that this Saul, who was praying at that very moment, had seen a vision of a man named, Ananias, coming to him and laying hands on him so that he might receive his sight.

Ananias questioned the wisdom of this action, noting that this Saul was one who had done much damage to Jesus' disciples in Jerusalem, and had come to Damascus with a warrant for the arrest of all Christians in the city – in other words, Ananias was afraid for his own safety.

The Lord insisted that Ananias do as he had been told, because this Saul was a chosen vessel. He was going to be Christ's witness before Gentiles, kings, and Jews. Not only that, this Saul was going to be shown how much he must suffer for the name of Christ.

Ananias immediately left for Judas' home, and finding Saul, he did exactly as instructed. He laid hands on Saul, and told him that Jesus, who had appeared to Saul on the road to Damascus had sent him to Saul. Then he said that the reason that he had been sent was to lay hands on Saul that he might receive his sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit. Immediately, scales fell from Saul's eyes and his eyesight was restored.

He then repeated the commission that Jesus had declared to Saul, three days earlier at the conclusion of the Damascus Road vision.

Ananias then urged Saul to delay no longer, but to get up, and be baptized, washing away his sins, and calling on the name of the Lord.

Saul obeyed this exhortation. Following his baptism, he broke his fast and regained his strength. He remained in Damascus for several days, then went to Jerusalem.

A number of things in this account call for comment.

First, is Ananias' strict keeping of the standards of the Mosaic Law, even though he was a disciple of Jesus Christ. This was not unusual for many of the first generation Jewish Christians. Notable examples are:

- The miracle of the lame man at the Gate called Beautiful, occurred because Peter and John were entering the Temple at the hour of Temple prayer (Acts 3)
- When Paul arrived in Jerusalem, he was told that many thousands of Jews had come to Christ, but that they continued to be zealous of the Law. The report in Jerusalem was that Paul had been teaching Jews to forsake Moses and the customs of Judaism. In order to dispel these rumors, Paul agreed to sponsor four Christian men who were under a vow (a

Jewish religious vow), by paying their vow fees and purifying himself along with them in the Temple.

- James, Jesus' half-brother, who is mentioned prominently as one of the leaders of the Jerusalem Church, and also wrote the New Testament Epistle of James, was respected by the Jews for his devout life of prayer. All traditions report that he was faithful in all that the Jews held sacred. Josephus reports that Ananus the High Priest had James stoned, and that this action caused a revolt among the high-minded Jews that Ananus was removed from office, after having served as High Priest for only three months.⁸⁹
- When Peter received the vision of the clean and unclean animals, he protested, *But I said, "By no means, Lord, for nothing unholy or unclean has ever entered my mouth."* (Acts 10:14; 11:8)

We will discuss this topic more fully in conjunction with Acts 15, but the important point here is that one could trust Jesus Christ for salvation, and still keep the Mosaic Law as a matter of conscience and tradition.

Another interesting observation is the coincidental occurrence two visions: Jesus' appearing to Ananias at the same time that He appeared to the praying Saul. Although it cannot be proven, we would assume that Ananias was in prayer at the time of the vision, for such is the usual biblical pattern.⁹⁰ However, there are exceptions, and Saul's experience on the road to Damascus is one immediately before us – unless Saul had been praying while walking, but such cannot be proven.

Ananias' explanation for the purpose of his visit catches our attention.

- So that Saul could regain his sight
- So that Saul could be filled with the Holy Spirit

The account records the first of these as being fulfilled. No mention is made of the second (being filled with the Holy Spirit).

The only instruction/exhortation given to Saul was Ananias' challenge to Saul to make a decision - to immediately be baptized, accompanied by a calling upon the name of the Lord.

- In biblical times and biblical literature, a person's name carries the essence of the person; hence, the frequent biblical injunction concerning taking the Lord's name in vain. To treat God's name casually, is to behave irreverently to God Himself – the name is more than just a term – reciting it is more than just sound-waves.
- Ananias' exhortation implies that Saul's being baptized was a means whereby he called upon the name of the Lord, i.e., *by being baptized, Lord, I am calling upon you to wash away my sins.*

⁸⁹ Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, XX:9

⁹⁰ Acts 10:9ff; Daniel 10; etc.

The introduction of the topic of baptism merits our attention. In this passage, the Greek term is middle voice βάπτισαι (*baptisai*), which conveys the idea of doing something to or in behalf of one's self. Usually, the term is passive (be baptized), but the convert in "getting baptized" is conceived as doing something for himself, not merely receiving something. In the New Testament, action is required on the part of the recipient.

To understand the import of Ananias' words to Saul, we must pause and consider the biblical purpose and importance of baptism. First we will review the three most prevalent theologies concerning this topic.

Sacramentalist View

Those who hold this view believe that Jesus established the Church as an institution through which His grace was to be administered. According to this view, Jesus committed to the Church special ceremonies called, *sacraments*. These sacraments, when administered by the Church as God's channel, are outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual grace which the Church-administered sacraments actually convey.

Sacramentalists believe that baptism, when applied to a Christian convert or to an infant actually accomplishes what the baptismal waters symbolize. Because the Church has faith and because the Holy Spirit resides in the Church, baptismal waters cleanse the soul and communicate new life to the recipient. The water not only symbolizes the grace from God, but it actually confers it on those who receive it *worthily*.

The word, *worthily*, is important. The term means that the recipient of baptism, usually an infant, does not obstruct the grace of God in any way. The faith that is present is represented in the Church's belief in and adherence to the truths of God, as revealed in Jesus Christ.

This is the view of Roman Catholicism, and with slight modification, by most Anglicans and Lutherans.

Augustine, in the early Fifth Century, was the primary teacher of the sacramentalist view. Augustine also was the early proponent of the doctrine of *original sin*. According to this doctrine, Adam was the *federal head* of the human race. Therefore, when he sinned, all of humanity sinned. As a result of Adam's sin, we not only have an inborn tendency toward sin, but we actually bear the guilt of Adam's disobedience and thus cannot enjoy the eternal presence of God. Baptism is the sacrament given to the Church that removes the guilt. The one baptized (usually an infant) is not saved in the full understanding of the word, but is *born again*, free of Adam's guilt, and thus can begin his lifelong quest for salvation – which involves good works, meritorious religious performance, etc. With some moderate refinement, the Roman Catholic Church codified this as its official doctrine in the Middle Ages. Only the Church⁹¹ (Roman Catholics would say, only the Roman Catholic Church) can perform this sacrament. Baptism by any institution or individual apart from the Church is ineffective.

When the Sixteenth Century reformers began examining the teachings of Roman Catholicism, special attention was given to the relationship between baptism and faith. Some reformers made major changes. Luther, surprisingly, made only minor changes in the doctrine. In his seminal

⁹¹ Most who hold this view would define the church as that institution which can trace its bishops in an unbroken line of succession back to the Twelve – usually Peter.

critique of Roman Catholicism, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, Luther stated that the normal pattern for baptism in the New Testament was baptism of believers only. However, in a reaction to the radical reformers, the Anabaptists, Luther refused to go down the road of believer's baptism.

Luther faced the difficulty of harmonizing his central doctrine of salvation by faith alone with the traditional doctrine of baptism – the only other alternative was to accept the doctrine of the Anabaptists, whom he deplored. He chose to claim that one of two things would take place in baptism:

1. The adult sponsoring the infant in baptism had the necessary faith to make the sacrament effective, or
2. God imparted faith to the infant during the baptismal act.

By taking this position, he tried to emphasize salvation by faith alone (which was Luther's primary doctrine), while retaining the traditional Roman Catholic view of the baptismal sacrament.

The Covenant View

Those of the Reformed and Presbyterian traditions hold to the covenant understanding of Baptism. The covenant view retains the term, *sacrament*, but its adherents do not believe that the sacraments automatically convey the reality of the symbols. To covenanters, the sacraments are signs and seals of covenant promises. Baptism is a *sign* of the "Father's calling, the Son's death and resurrection, and the Spirit's new life-giving work." This doctrine emphasizes God's sovereignty. God's grace makes possible our response, and so the "sign of the covenant" may be administered prior to an infant's ability to comprehend it, just as circumcision was administered to a Jewish infant, without his understanding of the significance of what had been done to him.

This view reflects the ancient understanding of covenant, which was a binding agreement between two parties. Promises and obligations were present on both sides and the covenant was ratified by visible sign(s) and/or ceremonies. The modern marriage ceremony is an illustration of this, when a man and a woman agree to live together in marriage covenant and they seal their vows by the exchanging of rings.⁹²

From the very beginning of the Church, Christians have recognized two covenants: the *Old Covenant*, between Jehovah and Israel, given at Sinai, with circumcision as the sign of the covenant; the *New Covenant*, instituted at Calvary, when Jesus died for our sins, with baptism being the covenantal sign. Covenant theology although recognizing differences, does not emphasize the distinctions between the two covenants.

John Calvin was the main proponent and developer of Covenant Theology. In his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Calvin emphasized the unity of a single, fundamental covenant with God, called, "*The Covenant of Grace*."

According to Covenant Theology, the covenant of grace first appeared clearly in Jehovah's covenant with Abraham (Genesis 12 & 17). The covenant of grace then ran through the

⁹² The bride's giving a ring to the groom, as a part of the marriage ceremony, did not become popular until after World War II. Prior to that time, a ring was given only to the bride.

covenant with Israel and then in the new covenant with the Church. There is one unified plan of God and his objective is (was) to reveal His mercy and forgiveness in Christ. Thus, the covenant is the same; only the administration of the covenant changes. In the old covenant, it was circumcision, in the new covenant it is baptism. Thus, as the infants of Israel bore in their flesh the outward symbol of the covenant, so babies born into Christian families enter the Church, the covenant community, through baptism.

According to this understanding, baptized infants do not receive salvation at their baptism. Covenanters teach that there is external form and an inner life. Within institutional Israel, there was a true Israel of faith. In the outward, institutionalized Church, there is a company of true believers. The two must not be confused. According to this view, the only advantage that infants receive at baptism is becoming a part of and receiving the advantages of life in the external Church. At some point in their lives, they must make a personal confession of Christ as their Saviour.

Believer's Baptism

According to this view, only those who have come to believe in the atoning work of Christ, and have confessed that faith, verbally, should be baptized into Jesus Christ. This view became the doctrine for which Anabaptists died during the Reformation. The term, *Anabaptist*, means, *baptize again*. Anabaptists, initially in a world in which everyone had been baptized as an infant by the Roman Catholic Church, taught that all who had been baptized as infants had to be baptized as adults, on the basis of faith and repentance. This view later was adopted by one of the groups among the English Puritans – this sub-group came to be known as *Baptists*. The advocates of this view pointed out that this was the New Testament pattern. The outward symbol – which normally is by immersion – serves as a clear testimony to an inward spiritual reality.

Among those who advocate believer's baptism there are distinctions concerning the importance of baptism in the removal of sin. Some declare that there is no salvation apart from baptism. Others declare that baptism is a sign of the salvation that already has been experienced by the believer.

Summary

- The Sacramentalist View rests on the case for the institutional Church as the vehicle of God's grace. Question: Did Jesus found a visible Church and commit to it certain sacraments as conveyors of saving grace?
- The Covenant View rests on the theology of the Covenant of Grace. Question: Did Jesus indicate that baptism is a replacement for circumcision as the sign of the covenant *in Christian families*?
- Believer's baptism rests on the grace of God in the heart of the confessing believer. Question: does the New Testament limit Christian baptism to those who have heard the Gospel, personally, repented of their sins and received Christ by faith?

What must I do, to be Saved?

Ananias' instructions to Saul, and Saul's response, bring us into the arena of asking "What is the biblical pattern of salvation?" From the three views on baptism, described above, there obviously is disagreement. Evangelicals tend to follow the Billy Graham model, "pray a sinner's prayer and invite Jesus into your heart." Roman Catholics, as noted above, have a different view. Some baptismal zealots declare that if one is not baptized according to the formula as they understand it, you are lost.

The question, "What must I do to be saved," is the most important question that a person can ask, because the answer determines one's eternal destiny. Scripture has a lot to say about this question, and some of it seems to be a bit confusing. For example, Paul wrote in Romans 10:9-10 that believing and confessing will result in salvation.

that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

In verse 13, of this passage, quoting Joel 2:32, Paul declares that whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

for "whoever will call on the name of the lord will be saved."

In this same passage (verses 14-17), Paul declares that the faith required for salvation is the result of hearing the preached word of Christ.

How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? ... So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

Peter, however, presented a different formula on the Day of Pentecost. Acts 2:37-41 describes this scene.

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?" Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. "For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself." And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!" So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.

On this occasion, Peter stated that repentance and baptism are essential elements in salvation.

In his First Epistle, using the figure of Noah's ark as the saving element for that righteous family, Peter declares that baptism is what saves us

Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you-- not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience-- through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, (1 Peter 3:21)

Paul, writing to the Ephesians declared

WHAT IS BAPTISM?

Because of the ambiguous use of the term, *baptism*, in contemporary Christianity, we cannot avoid asking, “What is baptism?” When someone in Scripture is instructed to be “baptized,” what are they being told to do? Among contemporary denominations three different acts are carried out under this term:

- Affusion, in which water is poured over the convert
- Sprinkling, in which water is sprinkled on the convert
- Immersion, in which the convert is lowered into a body of water

What did Our Lord command?

The Greek verb, βαπτίζω (*baptidzo*), and the Greek noun, βάπτισμα (*baptisma*), both primarily refer to immersion. The following is an excerpt from lexicographer J.H. Thayer’s comments on the verb, βαπτίζω

1. Prop. [literal meaning:] *to dip repeatedly, to immerge, submerge* (of vessels sunk, Polybius, 1, 51, 6; 8, 4, 4)...
2. *to cleanse by dipping or submerging, to wash...*
3. Metaphorically, *to overwhelm*

In the New Testament it is used particularly of the rite of sacred ablution... vis. An immersion in water, performed as a sign of the removal of sin, and administered to those who, impelled by a desire for salvation, sought admission to the benefits of the Messiah’s kingdom.⁹³

Thayer’s comments on the noun, βάπτισμα, are virtually identical:

1. Trope [figurative meaning]: *of calamities and afflictions of which one is quite overwhelmed.*
2. Of John’s baptism....
3. Of Christian baptism; *this, according to the view of the apostles is a rite of sacred immersion, commanded by Christ....*⁹⁴

Both of the above terms are derived from the Greek verb, βάπτω (*bapto*). Thayer comments on this verb,

- a. *to dip, dip in, immerse*
- b. *to dip into dye, to dye, to color*⁹⁵

Other lexicons would be consistent with Thayer.

Although the terms are used figuratively (metaphorically and symbolically), it is clear that the translated and uninterpreted terms mean, *to immerse*.

⁹³ Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Edinburgh, T. T. Clark; Peabody, Mass. Hendrickson Publishers) T.T. Clark 1896, Hendrickson 2000, Page 94

⁹⁴ Thayer page 94

⁹⁵ Thayer page 95

Examples from literature, demonstrating that this is the commonly understood meaning of these terms are so numerous that it is difficult to choose which one's to cite, but this note from the Roman Catholic Confraternity Edition Bible will suffice. Commenting on Paul's language in Romans 6:3-5,

Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection,

The New Catholic Confraternity Edition states,

“St. Paul alludes to the manner in which Baptism was ordinarily conferred in the primitive Church, by immersion. The descent into the 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.”⁹⁶

This comment is consistent with the general picture of New Testament doctrine.

One has to ask, “If immersion was the initiatory rite in the New Testament and in the early Church, whence came sprinkling and pouring?” The late First Century/early Second Century document, *The Didache*, gives us a hint. This document was composed by 120 AD – many assert that it was written in the First Century, before the close of the apostolic age. Describing the initiatory rite, *The Didache* states,

“Now concerning immersion, immerse as follows. After you have reviewed all these things [i.e. presented to the baptismal candidate the material that precedes this section], 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 the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.’”⁹⁷

Clearly, immersion was the form and every effort was made to reproduce the conditions of outdoor immersion, as was done by John, Jesus, and the itinerant apostles (who would have immersed converts in rivers, streams, public pools, etc.). If circumstances prevented immersion in cold, running water, then adjustments were to be made – the last resort being pouring water (not sprinkling) on the candidate's head three times. Such considerations were important, because those in prison often were converted by Christians imprisoned for their faith. In such

⁹⁶ *New Catholic Edition of the Holy Bible*, Old Testament Confraternity-Douay Version, New Testament Confraternity Edition, Imprimatur: Francis Cardinal Spellman, Archbishop of New York, (New York, Catholic Book Publishing Company) 1957, New Testament Page 199

⁹⁷ J.B. Lightfoot and J.R. Harmer, *The Apostolic Fathers, Greek Texts and English Translations* (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House) 1992 pages 258 (Greek), 259 (English)

circumstances, there would not be an opportunity to immerse.⁹⁸ Interestingly, the rite is not considered something that could be put off until circumstances allowed immersion. The rite was considered important enough to “get it done,” under any circumstances.

For a variety of reasons, which it would not be expedient to explore here, the Western Latin Church increasingly began to practice pouring and sprinkling, whereas the Eastern Greek Church, always immersed (one versed in Greek could only understand the term, *baptidzo*, as, “immerse”). When infant baptism became the norm, the Greek church immersed infants and the Latin Church sprinkled or poured water on the infant.

In 1054 AD, after growing controversies between the Church of the East and the Church of the West, Pope Leo IX excommunicated Michael Cerularius, Patriarch of Constantinople (the leader of the Eastern Church) and immediately, Cerularius called a synod and anathematized the Pope and all of his followers.

Among other differences that were crystallized by this event, was the practice of immersion in the Eastern Greek Church and sprinkling or pouring in the Western Latin Church. These differences continue to the present, although Roman Catholicism will recognize immersion if performed by Catholic clergy.

My personal view is that immersion was commanded by Jesus Christ and the apostles. Since I am not God, I do not believe that I have a right to offer a substitute for something ordained by Our Lord, nor could I be a member of a church that chose to do so. It seems to me that choosing to give tradition a higher authority than Scripture, or offering a substitute in place of that which Our Lord clearly commanded, is a form of blasphemy – irreverence for God by treating his commands as something common.

Acts 9:19-25

Saul immediately became a part of the Christian community in Damascus. Without delay, he began to demonstrate zeal for his new-found faith, with the same intensity that he had displayed in defending Judaism. The synagogues which formerly were to be his co-conspirators in arresting Christians, became the arena for his preaching and declaring, *This Jesus is the Christ!* The attendants at the synagogues were amazed at the change in Saul.

His arguments increasingly were irrefutable – being a well-educated Pharisee, he knew the Scriptures well – he seems to have been born with outstanding debating skills – he was convinced, by experience, of the truth of his proclamation – his speech was anointed by the Holy Spirit.⁹⁹ Not only that, he had experienced a season of communion with Christ, in which Our Lord imparted to him the full Gospel. Paul reports in his Galatian letter this season of revelation.

⁹⁸ Recently, in a *Christianity Today* online article, one correspondent argued that *The Didache* authorized a “variety of baptismal methods,” therefore we should allow great liberty on this question. This is a faulty reading of the document, which clearly considered anything other than immersion as a substitute demanded by expediency, not something that should become a routine practice.

⁹⁹ I Corinthians 2:4-5

For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it; and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions.

But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus.

Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days.¹⁰⁰

In this passage Paul declares that the Gospel that he preached was not imparted to him by Peter or any other apostle, nor any man, but it was imparted by direct revelation from Jesus Christ. That is the point that he is making about not going up to Jerusalem for at least three years after his conversion.

It is generally understood, and this does seem to be most reasonable, that Saul did not go to Arabia for a preaching tour. Rather he went to the sparsely populated region to be alone with God. It was in that setting that Our Lord revealed to him all of the truths of the Gospel that he later preached everywhere and in every setting.

An interesting aside is the fact that Jesus spent about three years discipling the Twelve, and then appeared to them for forty days prior to His ascension. About three years passed between Saul's conversion and his going to Jerusalem. These three years were the years in which the Gospel was imparted to Saul by the resurrected and glorified Lord. We regret that Saul/Paul and Luke did not give us more details about this experience.

When Saul returned to Damascus, newly empowered, the synagogue establishment was not able to either silence or refute him. They began planning to do the same thing to him that Saul and the Jerusalem establishment had done to Stephen, i.e., when you can't refute message, go after the messenger. They plotted to kill Saul. Saul must have gone into hiding, because the picture presented is of the Jews desiring to capture him., i.e., they guarded the gates, in case he tried to escape from the city.

Saul had been in Damascus long enough to have gathered a group of disciples who were loyal to him (note verse 25 – *his disciples*). One has to wonder if some of these were the soldiers who had been with him when Jesus had appeared on the trip to Damascus. Under the cover of darkness, Saul's disciples placed him in a basket and lowered him outside the city wall.

¹⁰⁰ Galatians 1:11-18

Acts 9:26-31

Paul made the seven-day journey back to Jerusalem, where he found himself to be a “man without a country.” He was not welcome among the Pharisees, because he now was claiming to be a follower of Christ. On the other hand he was not welcome among the disciples, because they thought that he was a deceiver and only wanted to get into their midst to arrest them.

For reasons not disclosed in Scripture, Barnabas became convinced of Saul’s genuineness and took him under his wing. Barnabas introduced him to the apostles and described what Saul had experienced on the road and his bold proclamation of Christ in Damascus. Because of Barnabas’ credibility and the apostles acceptance, Saul became a part of the community of the disciples in Jerusalem.

Again, Saul’s zeal took over and he began boldly to proclaim that the faith that formerly he had sought to destroy was the true faith.. He began to argue with the same group that Stephen had confronted – the Hellenistic Jews. Again, a plot to kill Saul was hatched by the enemies of the Gospel.

At this point, Saul received another vision.

"It happened 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 You. And when the blood of Your witness Stephen was being shed, I also was standing by approving, and watching out for the coats of those who were slaying him.'²¹ And He said to me, 'Go! For I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'"¹⁰¹

The Jerusalem Church learned of this plot, so a company of believers escorted Saul to the Caesarean seaport and sent him back to his home town of Tarsus.

Evidently, no Jewish zealot had arisen to replace Saul of Tarsus as the leader of the campaign to destroy the Church. As a result, the Church entered into an unusual season of peace, spiritual growth, and numerical increase. Acts 9:31 through Acts 11:18 describe some of the events that took place during this season. Peter is the leading character in this portion of Scripture.

¹⁰¹ Acts 22:17-21

SAUL'S SEASON OF INCUBATION

The next chapter in Saul's life is not described in any single narrative. Information concerning his life during the next six to 10 (the chronology is uncertain) years must be constructed from a number of isolated comments in his letters and Acts.

A. II Corinthians 12:2-10

I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago-- whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows-- such a man was caught up to the third heaven.

And I know how such a man-- whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows-- was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.

On behalf of such a man I will boast; but on my own behalf I will not boast, except in regard to my weaknesses. For if I do wish to boast I will not be foolish, for I will be speaking the truth;

but I refrain from this, so that no one will credit me with more than he sees in me or hears from me.

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

The Jews spoke of three heavens:

- (1) The atmospheric heaven – the immediate atmosphere around the earth – the area inhabited by birds
- (2) The astronomical heaven – the stars, planets, moon, sun, etc.
- (3) The celestial heaven – the dwelling place of God

Paul was speaking of an event in which a man was caught up into the celestial region – probably Paradise, where Jesus and the departed saints await the Second Coming.

Did Paul describe an event that he had experienced, or was he describing the experience of some other man? The answer is obvious, when considered in its context. This passage is in the midst of a section of the epistle in which he defends his apostleship. Certain false teachers in Corinth were saying that Paul was not an apostle but that they were. They were claiming that since they were apostles, the Corinthian Church should support them, and that Paul's refusal to receive financial support from them was evidence that he was not an apostle.

As one element of his defense, Paul presented the fact that God had given him many revelations. He said that he that he made this presentation with regret but that it was necessary for him to do so because of the false accusations made against him. Paul made the interesting comment that

even though he would not boast, that if he did choose to boast he would not be foolish; the things that he would recount would be true.

In the verses immediately before us, he described an experience that he had fourteen years before, but he declined to name himself, or even to use first-person pronouns, lest he might be seen to be glorying in his own exaltation. However, if were not referring to himself, this information makes no sense and has no place in the argument that he presented. Clearly, Paul describes his own experience.

Paul places the described event fourteen years before he wrote this letter. That dates the event on the cusp of his time in Tarsus or immediately after his arrival at Antioch. The episode fits better into the closing days of his time in Tarsus, than the intense activity of his year in Antioch. Thus it is apparent that not only did Jesus reveal the Gospel to Paul during his Arabian sabbatical, but continued to give him revelatory experiences. while in Tarsus. Being caught up into paradise and seeing the truth of that world strengthened Paul for the years of rigorous ministry that were to follow.

Another fact to consider is Paul's reporting of his *thorn in the flesh* in this context. Those who are of the Word of Faith community argue that Paul was referring to some individual who harassed him, because the thorn is called *a messenger of Satan*. Of course, such an explanation is necessary for advocates of this doctrine, because they cannot allow Paul to have had a physical infirmity. Some ancient writers agree with this view: Chrysostom, for example. One ancient writer, Ephraim Syrus identifies the thorn with Alexander the coppersmith (II Timothy 4:14).

Because a version of the Latin Bible translated the Greek terms with the Latin expression, *stimulus carnis*, a few commentators on the Latin Bible have argued that Paul was afflicted with the violence of sensual passions.

These conjectures really do not fit the language. The two operative Greek terms are σκόλοψ σαρκί (*skolops* –thorn; *sarki* - flesh). J. H. Barnard aptly writes,

“...St. Paul's trial is compared to the vexatious irritation of a thorn...the trial was not of the spirit [as would be true of the harassment of accusers or of sensual temptations] but of the *flesh* [emphasis in the original]”¹⁰²

The prevailing view understands Paul to refer to some sort of physical infirmity, something that was well known by those to whom he wrote. Jerome and Tertullian mention the tradition that it was chronic headaches. Ramsey thinks that the thorn was headaches, caused by chronic malarial fever, which was a common illness in Tarsus.¹⁰³ Another view put forth by some was epilepsy, a disease, these advocates of this position state, is one to which “visionaries” are prone.

In my opinion, the strongest case is with those who argue that the thorn was *ophthalmia*, a disease of the eyes. This fits Paul's statement to the Galatians,

but you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time; and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus

¹⁰² J.H. Bernard, DD, *The Expositors Greek New Testament, The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans Publishing) 1976, page 110-111

¹⁰³ W.M. Ramsay, D.C.L. L.L.D, *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen* (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House) 1949, page 94ff

*Himself. Where then is that sense of blessing you had? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me.*¹⁰⁴

Evidently, Paul and his company had not planned to pause in Galatia but a physical problem caused him to tarry there, and as a result Galatia received Gospel ministry from Paul. His physical appearance, caused by this illness could have caused them to loathe him, but they did not. Instead, they would have been willing to pluck out their eyes and give them to him – had that been possible.

This language lends credence to the idea that Paul's thorn in the flesh was some sort of eye disease, and that it began not long after the revelation in which he was caught up into the third heaven. The disease was allowed to come upon him because of the spiritual danger of developing an elitist view of one's self, as a result of being granted so many visions and revelations. This illness must have plagued him throughout his years of ministry.

C. Galatians 1:15-23

Returning to Paul's report in his Galatian letter, we learn from the verses following those examined above that after his return to Tarsus, he was busy evangelizing in the province of Cilicia/Syria. His target would have been Hellenistic Jews.

But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus.

Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days.¹⁹ But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother....

Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ; but only, they kept hearing, "He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy."

We have no certain record of any of his experiences in these years of evangelistic activity. However, we do have a possible glimpse in II Corinthians 11:24-25

*Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes.
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.*

This is in the earlier portion of Paul's defense of his apostleship (described above). Here he details some of the rigors that he experienced as an itinerant preacher of the Gospel (the list continues further, but only these statements are relevant to our quest).

The stoning is recorded as having happened during the first missionary journey at Lystra (Acts 14:19).

¹⁰⁴ Galatians 4:13-15

Luke lists six of Paul sea voyages, but only one shipwreck (Acts 27:12ff). When did these other shipwrecks occur? The Acts record allows no room for them. They had to have happened before the writing of II Corinthians, which was written before Paul's imprisonment. The only possible time that they could have happened was during this Cilicia/Syrian period (Paul uses the present tense in referring to his twenty-four struggle in the sea, showing that the horror of the event still was vividly remembered).

The same thing is true of the whippings and beatings. Acts records one (Acts 26:22). When did the others occur? Again, the Cilician/Syrian period is the only time that these could have taken place.¹⁰⁵

Barnabas and Saul in Antioch

Acts 11:19-30

Some of those who fled Jerusalem, as a result of Saul's persecution, made their way north to cities located on the northeastern region of the Mediterranean Sea. Some went to the large island of Cyprus (Barnabas' birthplace), whereas others remained in the coastal area of Phoenicia and Antioch. Initially they presented the Gospel only in Jewish synagogues. However, some believers from Cyprus and the far-away North-African city of Cyrene came to Antioch, and for some inexplicable reason, began to present the Gospel to Gentiles.

Even though Peter and the Jerusalem Church had been shown that Gentiles were to be admitted into the Church, no one deliberately had begun to target the Gentile community. The refugees who came to Antioch were the first to do so. The result was a significant harvest of souls among the Antiochan Gentiles.

Again, the wisdom of the Holy Spirit is demonstrated in this turn of events. The next item on God's Kingdom schedule was the evangelization of the Gentile world. Antioch, because of its location, population, and prosperity was the perfect launching pad for this venture. Antioch was the third largest city in the Roman Empire, exceeded only by Rome and Alexandria. It was a city of commerce and significant wealth. The Seleucids had spent great sums to make the city special. As was true of the much smaller Damascus, Antioch was laid out as a grid. Julius Caesar, Augustus, and Tiberius had enlarged and adorned the city. Herod the Great had paid for the erection of columns along the entire stretch of the main street and paved the street itself with polished stone, rather than the usual paving stone used for streets. It was the political capitol of the area, and was the gateway between the settled Graeco-Roman world and the Orient. Located eighteen miles inland from the Mediterranean sea. Its seaport was Seleucia Pieria and the navigable Orontes river was the avenue of commerce between Antioch and Seleucia. It was

¹⁰⁵ Although as already noted Roman citizens were exempt from such routine floggings, Saul was in rural areas and working among Jews during this period of his life. Thus, the floggings would have been administered by Jewish authorities in regions in which Roman Law may have been ignored. On the other hand, for reasons that we cannot declare, Saul may have chosen to be a Jew among Jews, in these settings, rather than a privileged Roman citizen.

more cosmopolitan than most Hellenic cities. Putting the situation in modern terms, if Tulsa were Jerusalem, and Washington, D.C. were Rome, then Antioch would be New York City.

When the believers in Jerusalem received news of the growing Church in Antioch, they sent Barnabas to visit this thriving new body of believers. This action was consistent with the Jerusalem Church's understanding of its role in the expanding Kingdom. Earlier, when word reached Jerusalem that the Gospel had flourished in Samaria, they sent Peter and John to that evangelistic success center.¹⁰⁶ Now that the Gospel had flourished in Antioch, they sent one of their best leaders to assess the situation.

The description of Barnabas' character explains why he is the one who was chosen for this mission.

... *for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.*¹⁰⁷

Barnabas was delighted by what he found at Antioch. He lived up to his nickname.¹⁰⁸ Rather than evangelizing, Barnabas' role was to encourage and teach the new converts. His ministry was to the Church, not the lost citizens of Antioch. The Acts 11 narrative implies that the significant numerical growth of the church was related, in some way, to Barnabas' ministry of encouragement. The number of new converts became so great that he needed help in discipling them. Recalling Saul's commission to reach the Gentiles, Barnabas headed off to Tarsus to look for his friend whom he had not seen for many years. When he found Saul, he brought him back to Antioch. For a full year, Barnabas and Saul taught the new believers truths about Christ and The Way.

It was during this season that the name, *Christian*, for the first time was applied to those who were disciples of Jesus. Some have contended that this began as derogatory term used by unbelieving Antiochans – then later the disciples turned the label into one of honor.¹⁰⁹ There is no evidence that such was the case. The term, from the first, seems to have been descriptive and appropriate. As the Herodians were followers of Herod, so Christians were followers of Christ. Greek-speaking Jews would not have used the term, *Christ*, as a name for Jesus, because it was a title, not a name. *Christos* is the Greek equivalent of the Semitic term, *messiah*, meaning, *anointed one*. For the Greeks of Antioch, who were not Jewish proselytes, *Christos* would have been used the same way that “pastor,” or “bishop,” is used today in addressing someone – their identity is in their title, rather than in their name (“Hello Pastor, good to see you”).

A complicating factor in the Latin world was the spelling of *Christos*. *Chrestus* (pronounced, “Chreestus”) was a name commonly found among Roman slaves. Because of this, in some Greek and Roman documents (especially government reports), there was confusion as to the

¹⁰⁶ Acts 8:14

¹⁰⁷ Acts 11:24

¹⁰⁸ Acts 4:36

¹⁰⁹ *Okie*, was a derogatory term that Californians applied to Oklahoma refugees who fled to California looking for work in the lush farms of that state. Signs at the outskirts of some California towns forbade any *Okies* from entering. However, during the administration of Oklahoma Governor George Nigh, the term was transformed into a proud label for citizens of Oklahoma. Merle Haggard reflected this in his song, *Okie from Muskogee*. Many have argued that the term, *Christian*, has a similar history.

spelling of the name of Christ, causing confusion about the identity of Jesus. If the name were *Chrestus*, he could have been a slave causing some sort of rebellion.

After Barnabas and Saul had been functioning as teachers of new Antiochan converts for about a year, some prophets from Jerusalem visited Antioch. The manner in which this visit is recorded, hints that there was routine coming and going between the two churches. Luke does not record how many prophets were in the band of visitors, but he names one of them - Agabus. Agabus seems to be a prophet of great respect in the early church; he will be encountered again at another important juncture in Paul's life.

While at Antioch, Agabus was shown by the Holy Spirit that a great famine was coming to the entire Roman Empire (Luke editorializes that this prophecy came to pass during the reign of Claudius). The ancient writer, Suetonius, reports that the principate of Claudius (41-54 AD) was marked by a succession of droughts and poor harvests.¹¹⁰ One famine was very severe in Judea, during the procuratorships of Cuspius Fadus and his successor Tiberius Julius Alexander (c. 46 AD). During this famine, Helena, the queen-mother of Adiabene and a proselyte to Judaism, bought grain in Egypt and figs in Cyprus for the relief of the Jews in Judaea. Her son, King Izates, sent money to the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem for distribution among the poor.¹¹¹ This probably was the famine to which Luke referred.

The disciples in Antioch realized that they would fare better in a famine than would the Church in Judea. So, out of fraternal concern, they sent a sum of money to Judea. This is the same spirit that prompted the Jerusalem Church to have a common purse in the earliest days (see discussion above). Barnabas and Saul were the ones entrusted with carrying to Jerusalem this generous gift.

Of note is the fact that upon arriving in Jerusalem, Barnabas and Saul gave the money to *the elders*.¹¹² This is the first mention of elders in the Church. We are not told when elders had been ordained in the Jerusalem Church, but from this time onward, elders were the leadership in every church described in the New Testament.

In his Epistle to the Galatians, Paul describes a visit to Jerusalem (Galatians 2:1-10). Although admitting some uncertainty, F. F. Bruce argues that the Galatians passage must be describing this visit. He bases this view on Paul's argument in Galatians that he did not receive any of his Gospel from men. In Galatians, Paul lists each contact that he had with the Jerusalem apostles. If the Galatians passage described the Jerusalem visit, recorded in Acts 15, Paul would have omitted from the Galatian letter the report of his alms-delivery mission to Jerusalem. This would have been a glaring omission, and would have weakened his argument that he did not confer with apostles in order to receive his Gospel. – i.e., that he had not met with the apostles and been instructed by them, but that he had been absent, consistently, from Jerusalem.¹¹³

In spite of Bruce's persuasive argument, I don't see how the Galatian passage could describe the visit of Barnabas and Saul recorded in Acts 11:27-30. Galatians 2:1 indicates that the visit described therein occurred either 14 years after Saul's conversion, or 14 years after Saul's post-Damascus visit to Jerusalem (already discussed above). The alms-delivery trip in Acts 11:27-30 is well removed from such a time frame. Galatians 2:1-10 must describe the Acts 15 conference.

¹¹⁰ Suetonius, *Life of Claudius*, 18, 2.

¹¹¹ Josephus, *Antiquities*, iii, 320f; xx 51-53, 101

¹¹² Acts 11:30

¹¹³ Cf: Bruce, *Paul, the Apostle of the Heart Set Free*, page 151

After fulfilling their mission, Barnabas and Saul returned to Antioch. Barnabas' nephew, John Mark, accompanied them back to Antioch. John Mark, whose home had been the meeting place for a portion of the Jerusalem Church (especially those close to Peter),¹¹⁴ later wrote the Gospel of Mark.¹¹⁵

The next section of Acts (Acts 12:1-24) reports the martyrdom of James and the arrest of Peter – followed by his miraculous release. The saga of Barnabas and Saul resumes at the close of this account.

THE MISSIONARY JOURNEYS

Even though Saul had received his commission on the road to Damascus, when the glorified Christ appeared to him in a vision,¹¹⁶ and the commission was repeated by Ananias prior to Saul's baptism,¹¹⁷ then confirmed by a vision in the Temple,¹¹⁸ and even though he did evangelize among Jews during his Tarsus season, the formal launching forth into that commission did not occur until approximately 10 years after the commission first was given (depending on how one arranges the chronology).

The First Missionary Journey

Acts 13 – 14

After returning from their benevolent mission to Jerusalem, Barnabas and Saul resumed their ministry of teaching and discipling at Antioch. Three other mature teachers and prophets also were active in Antioch. The order in which they are listed betrays something of the hierarchy of respect that existed in the group. Barnabas, who was esteemed both in Jerusalem and Antioch, heads the list. Saul, Barnabas' junior partner, is last on the list.

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.¹¹⁹

The three named with Barnabas and Saul are identified by Luke:

¹¹⁴ Acts 12:12

¹¹⁵ Acts 12:25

¹¹⁶ Acts 26:16-18

¹¹⁷ Acts 9:15; 22:15

¹¹⁸ Acts 22:17-21

¹¹⁹ Acts 13:1

- **Simeon:** The Latin term, *niger*, means, *black*. Thus, we conclude that Simeon, whose nickname was *Niger*, was black or at least was of dark complexion.¹²⁰ He probably was from Africa and could have been the Simon of Cyrene who carried the cross for Jesus.¹²¹ Simon of Cyrene was well known in the early church, as is attested by Mark's identifying Simon by his parentage of two sons in leadership in the Roman Church.¹²² If he and Simon of Cyrene are one and the same, he would have been a fellow country-man with Lucius (below) and probably one of those who first brought the Gospel to the Gentiles of Antioch.¹²³
- **Lucius:** Cyrene was and is a city on the northern coast of Africa in Libya. It is interesting that two of the five prominent leaders in Antioch were from Africa. As commented above concerning Simon, Lucius probably was one of those who first brought the Gospel to the Gentiles of Antioch. Such a long tenure in the Antiochan Church would explain his leadership position in the church.
- **Manaen:** Having been reared with Herod Antipas, Manaen would have been educated in Rome with at least three of the sons of Herod the Great.¹²⁴ Manaen was a man who had been reared in a world of privilege, a scion of a prominent family. How striking that instead of becoming a Roman politician, he became a leader in the Church.

From this description, it is apparent that the Church at Antioch had strong, mature leadership.

For reasons that we do not know, perhaps it was their custom, these five leaders were meeting together during a season of prayer and fasting. None of them could have anticipated the outcome of their prayer meeting. We are not told how the Holy Spirit spoke to them, it could have been an audible voice, or Spirit to spirit, but the manner was of such that they did not doubt the origin of the message. The Holy Spirit said,

*Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.*¹²⁵

The five didn't immediately jump up and carry out the deed. Instead, they prepared for it by continuing in a season of fasting and prayer. Only then did they laid hands on the two and set them apart for the ministry to which they had been called. One wonders if this prayerful council had some intimation of what was ahead for the two.

The language in this section is significant. First, the terms, *set apart for me...into the work*, need to be absorbed into our thinking.

- The first Greek term is ἀφορίζω (*aphoridzo*) which simply means to, *set apart*.
- The second term is μοι (*moi*), meaning, *to me*. It is important to understand that Barnabas and Saul were not just to be separated *from* something, but were to be dedicated *to* something.

¹²⁰ The nickname, "Blackie" was common among the Irish a generation ago – usually the term was bestowed upon an Irishman with coal-black hair.

¹²¹ Matthew 27:32

¹²² Mark 15:21; In Romans 16:13, Paul refers to Rufus, whom tradition identifies as the same Rufus mentioned in Mark.

¹²³ Acts 11:20

¹²⁴ See earlier information about the Herods

¹²⁵ Acts 13:2

- The third important terminology consists of the words, εἰς τὸ ἔργον (*eis to ergon*) meaning, *into the work*. “Into” is key. It is not merely, “for,” but “into,” implying a full immersion of their persons into this new reason for their existence.

The language describing the final act of the council also is important. The three other leaders laid hands on them and ἀπέλυσαν (*apelusan*). The term means *to release*. They did not send them; the Greek term for sending would have been πέμπω (*pempo*) or some similar term. This is an important point; the local church leadership appropriately lays hands on and releases missionaries. It is God’s business to send; it is the church’s business to release. Correctly defined, no institution should view itself as a “sending agency.”

Verse 4 clearly identifies the sending agent (agency)

*So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia and from there they sailed to Cyprus.*¹²⁶

Cyprus: Acts 13:4-12

Barnabas and Saul took John Mark with them, to be their helper. He would have been responsible to serve the needs necessary for daily maintenance, so that Barnabas and Saul could give themselves to the ministry. They traveled eighteen miles down the Orontes River to the seaport of Seleucia, and then sailed 90 miles to the large island of Cyprus. They landed at Salamis on the southeastern side of the island.

Immediately, they began the pattern that they would follow throughout the trip. They first went to the Jewish synagogues, proclaiming the Gospel. They traveled from Salamis to the western side of the island, arriving at the city of Paphos. This was the seat of Roman government in the area. The proconsul was Sergius Paulus, described as a “man of intelligence.” Sergius Paulus was eager to hear the Gospel and so he summoned the preachers.

Satan had an agent on hand, in the person of a Jewish false prophet named, *Bar-Jesus* (the name means, “Son of Jesus”). Luke also gives him an alternative name, *Elymas*. This second name is not an interpretation of *Bar-Jesus*, as most versions indicate. The name, *Elymas*, probably is akin to the Semitic word, *alim*, meaning, *sage*.¹²⁷

When Elymas began to oppose the preachers, trying to keep Sergius Paulus from accepting the Gospel, Saul was filled with the Holy Spirit (the Greek terms indicate, *having just been filled*¹²⁸) confronted the false prophet in the strongest of terms.

*"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?
"Now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and not see*

¹²⁶ Acts 13:4

¹²⁷ Bruce, *Acts*, page 249 fn 24

¹²⁸ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing House) 1996 pages 614-615, 624-625 When both the main verb (ἀτενίσας) and a preceding participle (πλήσθεις) both are aorist, they should be understood as occurring simultaneously. In Acts 13:9, πλήσθεις (*filled*) is aorist passive participle. The main verb, ἀτενίσας (*fix one’s eyes – look intently*) is an aorist active participle.

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.¹²⁹

When the proconsul heard and saw these events, he believed, *being amazed at the teaching of the Lord*. Bruce comments that this scene is reminiscent of Jesus' beginning ministry in Capernaum, in which the people were impressed with the authority of his teaching, not only heard His words but saw his healing power.¹³⁰

Pisidian Antioch: Acts 13:13-52

Two significant changes took place as the team began the next leg of its journey:

- From this point on, Saul uses his Roman name, Paul;
- Barnabas no longer is spoken of as the senior member of the team. It now was Paul's team.

Now Paul and his companions put out to sea...¹³¹

From Cyprus, the three men sailed northwest to Pamphylia (the territory between the Taurus Mountain Range and the Mediterranean Sea). They disembarked at the port of Attaleia (modern Antalya). Perga, the chief city of Pamphylia, was located about six miles upstream (some geographies say seven miles) on the Cestus River (modern Aksu). Perga was on the busy coastal road between Ephesus and Tarsus.

When they arrived in Perga, for reasons not revealed, John Mark left the team and headed back to Antioch. We can only speculate as to his reasons for abandoning the mission. Perhaps Mark was homesick. Perhaps he recoiled at the rigors that they were experiencing. Perhaps he realized that they were entering dangerous traveling conditions. Perhaps he resented the fact that his uncle Barnabas no longer was the functional leader of the team and Paul's zealous team leadership offended him. We cannot be certain of Mark's motives, but whatever his motives might have been, Paul considered him to be a deserter.¹³²

The team did not spend time in Perga.¹³³ After Mark's departure, they immediately set out on the next leg of their journey. They traveled north, passing through Pamphylia and entered Pisidia. After about 100 miles of walking, they arrived at Pisidian Antioch.

¹²⁹ Acts 13:10-11

¹³⁰ Bruce, *Acts*, page 250

¹³¹ Acts 13:13

¹³² Acts 15:37-38

¹³³ We are not told why they ignored Perga. Given Paul's temperament, it could be that he was so upset by John Mark's departure that he just wanted to get away from that place and get on with the mission. The team did pause in Perga for ministry on the way home.

There was a sizeable Jewish colony in Pisidian Antioch and thus, a sizeable synagogue. Paul and Barnabas went to the synagogue on the first Sabbath after arrival and took their place in the congregation. After the appropriate reading of the Scriptures, first from the Pentateuch and then a reading from the prophets that was in sync with the Pentateuchal passage, an address usually was given by some member of the congregation. On this occasion, since two visitors from Palestine were present, they were asked to give a word of exhortation to the congregation. Because it was the custom to extend such an invitation to synagogue visitors, Paul and Barnabas probably had anticipated this turn of events. Paul quickly accepted the invitation.

Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said, "Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen."¹³⁴

Some scholars consider the gesture by which Paul began his speech, *motioning with his hand*, to have been some sort of an unconscious habit. Many speakers have such unconscious habits. Luke mentions this gesture three times in his record of Paul's experiences.¹³⁵

Paul began his remarks by summarizing Jewish history, emphasizing those points that would lead to the conclusion that he desired to press upon them. He focused on the promise of a king who would be a descendent of David. Paul declared that according to promise, God had brought forth that descendant - Jesus, who is the Saviour. In order to add credence to his argument, Paul related the testimony of John the Baptist.

Paul then moved into the dangerous territory that Stephen had entered in his sermon before the Sanhedrin; he stated that the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem had caused the unjust execution of Jesus. Paul quickly moved to his conclusion,

- declaring that God raised up Jesus,
- that many saw the resurrected Lord,
- that this one raised up, is the Saviour,
- and 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.¹³⁶

He closed with a warning from the prophets, concerning the danger of scoffing at God's work.

Great enthusiasm was generated by this message. When the synagogue meeting had closed, many ethnic Jews and God-fearing Hellenistic Jews followed Paul and Barnabas, who continued in their exhortation. They urged Paul and Barnabas to come back next week and tell them more about these things.

¹³⁴ Acts 13:16

¹³⁵ Acts 13:16; 21:40; 26:1

¹³⁶ Acts 13:38-39

The following Sabbath, as they had been urged to do, Paul and Barnabas were at the synagogue. A huge crowd showed up. Not only those who were members of the synagogue, but almost everyone in Antioch came to hear the word of God.

When the synagogue leaders saw the popularity of Paul and Barnabas they became jealous – after all, the rabbis were supposed to be the ones who led the people into all truth. As a result of this jealousy, the Jews began to oppose them – they began reviling (βλασφημοῦντες - *blaspheming*) Paul and Barnabas. When this became intense, the apostles boldly declared that they were obligated to first speak to the Jews, but since the Jewish leaders were rejecting their message, they then would begin to address the Gentiles.

This caused great rejoicing among the Gentiles. At this point, the narrative states,

*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.*¹³⁷

This is one of the strongest passages in Scripture concerning God’s involvement in how or why one responds to the Gospel. The terms are clear ὅσοι ἦσαν τεταγμένοι εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον (*osoi esan tetagmenoi eis zoen eionion*). Literally, the Greek states, “as many as were having been appointed into life eternal.” The perfect passive participle indicates that those who responded did so because a force other than they themselves had acted – had appointed them to life eternal. Whatever view one might have concerning the free will of man and the sovereignty of God, this passage is clear in what it declares.

The result was that the word of God was spread throughout the region. In reaction to this, the Jews stirred up devout women of prominence and leading men of the city and launched a persecution against missionaries and drove them out of town. The word rendered, “devout,” is the term consistently used for those who were careful keepers of the Law, especially proselyte Hellenistic Jews.¹³⁸ The women obviously were some of those who had not been determined to eternal life. The women described here were women of high connections, having influence in the political world. They were members of the families of the *leading men of the city*.

As Paul and Barnabas left Antioch, they did what Jesus had instructed the Twelve to do

*Whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake the dust off your feet. Truly I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city.*¹³⁹

They left behind a company of Gentile disciples who were filled continually with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

¹³⁷ Acts 13:48

¹³⁸ Acts 2:5ff; 10:2, 7; 22:10

¹³⁹ Matthew 10:14-15; Mark 6:11; Luke 9:5; 10:11

Iconium: Acts 14:1-6

Leaving Antioch, they traveled 90 miles southeast to Iconium. Here again they boldly proclaimed the Gospel in the synagogue. Once again, many Jews and Greeks believed and became Christians. The team remained in Iconium for an extended period of time, preaching and teaching, and performing many miracles as confirmation of their message.

As to be expected, the synagogue leaders and disbelieving Jews began to stir opposition. Some in the city sided with the Jews and some sided with the apostles. However, when the Jewish leaders and the Gentiles who sided with them began to devise a plot whereby they stone Paul and Barnabas, the team left the city and proceeded on to their next preaching point.

Lystra: Acts 14:7-20

Lystra is 18 miles south-southwest of Iconium. Lystra was a Roman colony and it was connected by a 100 mile long military road with Pisidian Antioch. The road did not pass through Iconium. Evidently, no Jewish synagogue existed at Lystra. Paul and Barnabas must have engaged in street preaching. One day (perhaps the first sermon preached at Lystra) a crippled man sat near listening to the preaching. Luke emphasizes by three phrases the condition of the man:

- Without strength in his feet
- Lam from his mother's womb
- Who had never walked.

The condition of the man was well-known in the city. When Paul looked intently at the man, he saw that he believed and had faith to be σωθηται (*sothenai*). The Greek word means, *be saved*, or *be delivered*. This term is used in Scripture to refer to being delivered or saved

- from natural dangers and afflictions;
- it also is used to refer to being rescued or delivered from eternal death (to "be saved").

What is meant by the term in this passage? Most versions display dynamic equivalency in rendering this term in this passage (interpreting, rather than translating), interpreting the deliverance to be from affliction. Others stay on safe ground and render the term by its literal meaning, "saved," without deciding what salvation is inferred.¹⁴⁰

Whether or not the man had faith to be healed, or faith to be saved from his sins, Paul ordered him to stand up. Immediately the man responded, leapt up, and began to walk.¹⁴¹ The multitudes who witnessed this and who responded were not Romans. They were native Lycaonians and began crying out in their native language (a form of Greek) that the gods had visited them.

¹⁴⁰ Young's Literal Translation; The Concordant Literal New Testament

¹⁴¹ This incident is almost identical to the healing of the lame man in Acts 3.

They began calling Barnabas, *Zeus* (*Jupiter* in Latin) and Paul, *Hermes* (*Mercury* in Latin). Zeus was the father of the gods, and Hermes was the messenger of the gods. Obviously the crowd applied the labels as they did because Barnabas was the more distinguished older man and Paul was the zealous speaker. The priest of Zeus and the crowds tried to sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas, and cover them with garlands. Paul and Barnabas violently sought to restrain the crowds from proceeding with this pagan worship. They almost failed in their attempt to put an end to the demonstration.

Shortly thereafter, Jews from Antioch and Iconium, determined to rid the area of the apostles, followed them to Lystra and in time won over the crowds. Their plot to stone Paul and Barnabas in Iconium had failed. In Lystra, they were able to carry out part of their mission; they stirred up the crowd to the point that they stoned Paul. After they had stoned him, and considering him to be dead, they drug his body out of the city and left it on the road. As the disciples of Lystra gathered about Paul, to everyone's joyous surprise, Paul got up and went back into town. The next day, he and Barnabas left for nearby Derbe.

Derbe: Acts 14:20-21

The apostles walked southeast, 60 miles to Derbe. Here they had significant evangelistic success and there is no report of the violence that had taken place in the previous cities.

The Road Home: Acts 14:21-28

Following their ministry in Derbe, Paul and Barnabas retraced their steps, spending time with each new church that had developed in response to their preaching. There is no report of persecution erupting during these visits. We can speculate as to the reason for the lack of persecution. Perhaps it was because Paul and Barnabas limited their teaching to the confines of church meetings. Perhaps it was because the man whom the Jews had left for dead at Lystra had "come back to life" and they were afraid of him. Perhaps the sovereignty of God was enforcing such a peace. Be that as it may, the journey back home was one of peace.

Paul and Barnabas remained in each location until they had ordained elders in every church. Paul never considered a church to be fully established until this had been done. In his second and third missionary journeys, there were times when Paul was not able to remain in a recently evangelized area long enough to ordain elders. In such instances, he often deposited Timothy or Titus in these new churches, for this purpose.

As noted earlier, on the way into Pamphylia, they had not paused to preach in the gateway city of Perga; after Mark's defection, they had hurried on to Antioch. The team did not neglect Perga on the way home. They spent an indefinite time in the city evangelizing.

After ministering in Perga, they traveled down-river to the port of Attalia, boarded a ship and sailed back to Seleucia, then upriver to Antioch.

When they arrived at Antioch, they gave an inspiring report to the church. They spent several months in Antioch before the next event reported by Luke.

Interlude: The Jerusalem Conference Settling the Gentile Issue Acts 15:1-35

Approximately fifteen years before the situation recorded in Acts 15, Peter, in spite of his protest, had been directed by the Holy Spirit to the home of the Roman Centurion Cornelius.¹⁴² Several Jewish Christians from Joppa accompanied Peter on this trip. Cornelius was a Gentile, obviously not circumcised, or else the purpose of the visit would not have been achieved. When Peter entered the home he said to the Gentiles gathered in the room,

*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.*¹⁴³

Cornelius then described the visitation of the angel that had taken place, directing him to send for Peter. Having had his own Holy Spirit imparted vision, and then hearing Cornelius' report of the angelic visit, Peter could not deny that the Holy Spirit had directed him to this place to present the Gospel. He stated,

*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.*¹⁴⁴

In order to confirm that God approved of the reception of uncircumcised Gentiles, the Holy Spirit fell on the crowd while Peter was preaching. The Gentiles began speaking in tongues and exalting the Lord. This was a sovereign act of God which the circumcised believers could not deny. The gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles just as it had on Jews at Pentecost. Thus, they immediately immersed these believing Gentiles.

When Peter returned to Jerusalem, the circumcised Jewish Christians began to accuse him,

*You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them.*¹⁴⁵

Peter then told of the vision whereby the Holy Spirit had directed him to go to the home of Cornelius. Then came the clincher,

*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 baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." Therefore if God gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?*¹⁴⁶

No one could argue against this sovereign act of God, and so the group glorified God, acknowledging that God had granted to the Gentiles *the repentance that leads to life.*¹⁴⁷

¹⁴² Acts 10:1 – 11:18

¹⁴³ Acts 10:28

¹⁴⁴ Acts 10:34-35

¹⁴⁵ Acts 11:3

¹⁴⁶ Acts 11:15-17

¹⁴⁷ Acts 11:18

One would think that this episode and acknowledgment that God had accepted Gentiles into the Kingdom would have settled the question, once and for all. However, such was not the case. Within the Jerusalem church was a group of Jewish Christians who were not too happy with the aforementioned conclusion. Paul labeled them, *Judaizers*. The Judaizers were super-zealous racists. They maintained that before Gentiles could be saved, they first had to be circumcised and become Jewish proselytes. They fostered a partisan spirit within the Jerusalem Church that became a Pharisaic party. They were more Pharisaic than Christian, exalting ceremonialism above spirituality. This brought on the first cleavage in primitive Christianity.

J. W. Shepard constructs the argument that they probably used:

“These claimed that the Scriptures were on their side, and argued that God had positively ordered, through his servant, Moses, circumcision for the Jews (Gen. 17:14). Moreover, they said neither Jew nor Gentile coming into the fold of Christianity was ceremonially exempt, because the patriarch Abraham administered circumcision to his household, including Ishmael and every male. In previous history the Jews had been the exclusive chosen race and Gentiles must come into Judaism as proselytes, if at all, submitting to the rite of circumcision and all the Law. Now these distinct religious racial customs, though heavy to be borne, yet had come to be considered a badge of superiority, and thus created aristocratic pride in the Jewish people. Furthermore, they expected their Messiah to come and reign over them victoriously, delivering them from enemy-oppressors¹⁴⁸. ... Christ Himself was a Jew and kept the whole Law.¹⁴⁹

Some months after Paul and Barnabas had returned to Antioch, Judaizers from Jerusalem arrived on the scene. They began to declare that one could not be saved unless he first was circumcised according to the custom of Moses. Paul and Barnabas engaged in heated debate with these men, causing serious unrest in the Antiochan Church.

The Antioch brethren displayed a Christ-like spirit. In the Sermon on the Mount, and later in Matthew 18, Jesus declared the importance of conferring and seeking reconciliation when there were differences between brethren.¹⁵⁰ The Antiochans realized that the unity of the Church was at stake.

Although deeply concerned about being agents of division, Paul and Barnabas knew that doctrine trumped conformity for the sake of peace. Three things convinced them that the doctrinal position that they espoused was God’s doctrine:

- The Peter/Cornelius episode
- The Gospel that had been given to Paul by Divine revelation
- God’s consistent approval of their ministry among the Gentiles

They also knew that if Jerusalem disavowed their apostleship, and if circumcision became the orthodox position, that all of their work would be discredited. The consequences for the Gentile churches would be enormous. Therefore, it was determined that Paul and Barnabas, along with a delegation from the Antioch Church, should go to Jerusalem to settle this issue once and for all.

¹⁴⁸ Shepard, page 118

¹⁴⁹ Shepard, page 119

¹⁵⁰

The delegation traveled south along the coastal highway through Phoenicia. At some point they turned inland and traveled through Samaria. By traveling through Samaria, they demonstrated their freedom from Jewish prejudice. Jews viewed the Samaritans as “unclean dogs” and whenever possible, avoided traveling through that region. If traveling the coastal road, a Jew would proceed to Joppa then turn inland and travel southeast to Jerusalem. If traveling to Jerusalem from Galilee, a religious Jew would take the road on the east side of the Jordan, then turn west at Jericho. The Antioch delegation ignored these concerns and traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria, pausing along the way to visit churches in the region. They reported in detail the Gospel harvest among the Gentiles. The brethren in the Phoenician and Samaritan churches were filled with great joy by these reports. Luke does not mention such declaration and rejoicing in Judea. Paul and Barnabas knew that the Judean churches would have a problem with this information, and so it seems that they passed through that region without pausing to give any reports.

Two parallel accounts of the Jerusalem Council are given in Scripture. The one before us (Acts 15) is Luke’s historical narrative of the meeting. It presents the general picture of what took place. The second account is found in Galatians 2:1-10. Because of the statement that the visit described in Galatians 2 occurred after fourteen years (either of his conversion or after his post-Damascus visit to Jerusalem) it fits exactly into the time slot occupied by the Acts 15 episode. In the Galatian account, Paul describes personal behind-the-scenes events. We will harmonize these two accounts.

Paul not only went up to Jerusalem because the Antioch Church leaders wanted to resolve this issue, once and for all, but Paul also had a God-given revelation that he was to make the trip (Galatians 2:2).

Only one of the Greek Christians in the delegation is named. Titus, who later became one of Paul’s most trusted apostolic delegates, accompanied Paul and Barnabas, along with others from Antioch (Galatians 2:1). Being an Hellenistic Christian, Titus was uncircumcised. His presence was a key element in the debate.

Luke’s description of the delegation’s reception in Jerusalem is interesting. He reports that they were received

- by the Church
- by the apostles
- by the elders

From Acts 11:30 onward, the twelve apostles no longer were the church government in Jerusalem. The church government consisted of the *apostles and elders*. The scene before us reflects this paradigm. In time, all of the Twelve left Jerusalem, but the elders remained as the church government. James, the biological half-brother of Jesus, continued in a prominent role in the Jerusalem Church until his death. Although James was not one of the Twelve, at some undetermined point, the title, *apostle*, was applied to him.¹⁵¹

¹⁵¹ Galatians 1:19

The first meeting: the assembled church (Acts 15:4-5)

Common courtesy dictated that the visitors from Antioch should be invited to address the assembly, before any opposition speakers should be given the floor. Because he was a respected brother in Jerusalem, we would expect Barnabas to have been the first speaker, followed by Paul. Be that as it may, the missionaries reported on the huge harvest of souls in the Gentile world.

The immediate response was not one of great rejoicing. The Pharisee sect in the church immediately sought to take over the meeting – declaring that Paul and Barnabas had preached a defective message. The Pharisees declared that these Gentile Christians had to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses. They did not agree with the decision that the Jerusalem Church leaders had made following Peter’s visit to the home of Cornelius (that Gentiles, as well as Jews, were accorded entrance into the Kingdom).

The second meeting: the apostles and elders (Acts 15:6; Galatians 2:2)

Because most of the audience consisted of Jews, who were influenced by the Pharisaical rhetoric, it was not wise to continue the public meeting. A. T. Robertson jests that James, the moderator, “quickly adjourned for dinner,” a convenient parliamentary device to gain time for reflection before further discussion.¹⁵² Galatians 2:2 implies that Paul called for the private meeting. Since Peter and John are the only members of the Twelve mentioned by name, along with James (not one of the Twelve), it is possible that only these two of the Twelve were in Jerusalem at the time. However, Peter and John were the most prominent of the Twelve and James was the most respected member of the Jerusalem Church. Paul knew that because these were so highly respected, their word would have settled the matter. Paul described the his motivation for calling for this private meeting,

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...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.¹⁵³

In the private meeting, Paul presented in minute detail the Gospel that he and Barnabas preached among the Gentiles. This was the same Gospel that the Jerusalem Church leaders had affirmed a decade before. In essence, Paul challenged them as to whether or not they were going to stand up to the Pharisees and affirm their previous decision, or cave in as did Peter did during his visit to Antioch (Galatians 2:11ff). Not only did the apostles have the evidence of the Cornelius incident to guide their decision, they also had the words of Jesus Himself. In the great commission, the apostles were instructed to immerse converts, but no mention was made of circumcision. Jesus also said, of the Gentiles,

I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² Shepard, page 118

¹⁵³ Galatians 2:2, 6

¹⁵⁴ John 10:16

An “in your face” element in the meeting was Titus. Paul seems purposely to have selected Titus as a part of the Antiochan delegation. Titus was an outstanding example of a disciple of Jesus Christ, but he was uncircumcised. The apostles and elders could not ignore his presence as a case in point.

Paul described to the Galatians the outcome of this private meeting.

But not even Titus, who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised....But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised⁸ (for He who effectually worked for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles),⁹ and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we might go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.¹⁰ They only asked us to remember the poor-- the very thing I also was eager to do.¹⁵⁵

Paul and Barnabas had won the victory in the leaders meeting. The apostles and elders adjourned the private meeting and returned to the assembled congregation.

The Third meeting: The assembled church (Acts 15:7-29)

When the public meeting was resumed, the Pharisaical sect was allowed to express itself without restraint. The debate went back and forth, between Paul & Barnabas and the Christian Pharisees.

After allowing time for all sides to express themselves, Peter stood up in the meeting and reminded everyone of the event a decade earlier when God chose him to be the one to declare to the church that God accepted uncircumcised Gentiles in the same manner as He accepted the circumcised Jews. This had been demonstrated when Peter’s sermon to the Gentiles in Cornelius’ home was interrupted by the sovereign outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon these Gentiles. Peter then challenged the Judaizers,

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.¹⁵⁶

Peter’s speech silenced everyone. Barnabas and Paul then gave a lengthy report of the signs and wonders that God had done through them, among the Gentiles. When they had finished speaking, James got up and gave the consensus of the meeting,

Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name. 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, so 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 long ago.

¹⁵⁵ Galatians 2:3, 7-10

¹⁵⁶ Acts 15:10-11

*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.*¹⁵⁷

DISCURSUS

Rebuilding the Tabernacle of David

Acts 15:15-18; Amos 9:12; I Chronicles 15:1; 16:1-6, 37-42

In the late 1960's, various teachers stated that through the new worship forms and the growing emphasis on "worship" God was rebuilding the Tabernacle of David. Disparaging remarks were made about the Tabernacle that was at Gibeon, where the priests were conducting "old dead worship forms." This was contrasted with the tabernacle that David set up for the Ark, in which worship music was performed 24/7, but none of the traditional ceremonies established by God through Moses were observed. According to the leaders of this particular worship movement, new forms of worship were released by the Holy Spirit in the 1960's and this was the rebuilding the Tabernacle of David. This is poor exegesis and reflects an agenda, more than sound hermeneutics.

The Tabernacle at Gibeon, where traditional worship continued, was God's plan. If that Tabernacle had been neglected, and the various God-commanded sacrifices and ceremonies had ceased, Israel's sin would have been compounded. The fact that all of the Tabernacle ceremonies were continued after the construction of the Temple, is evidence that God was not through with these acts of worship. There is no instance in which God suspended these Tabernacle services.

It is true that centuries later, Judah's hypocritical acts of worship in the Temple were condemned. Jehovah declared that their ceremonies were odious to Him (Isaiah 1:10-15), but the problem was not the ceremonies; the daily lives of the worshippers were not consistent with their religious activity. God's response was for them to repent (Isaiah 1:16ff).

Similarly, Amos condemned the worship of the Israelite nation in Bethel (Amos 5:21-24). This was done for two reasons:

1. The altar at Bethel was built by Jeroboam in order to keep the people of Israel (the northern kingdom) from going to Jerusalem to worship at the Temple that God had sanctioned.
2. As with the people of Judah, those who worshipped at Bethel did not live lives consistent with their acts of worship. Jehovah called Israel to repent of injustices.

Amos predicted that the day would come when the people of God no longer would be divided into two kingdoms, but that the dynasty of David (David's tent) would be restored and all would be under that dynasty. The term, Tabernacle, literally, *tent*, refers to where one dwells – it is symbolic of one's family, which is what comprises a dynasty.

In Acts 15:15ff, James quoted Amos' prophecy concerning the rebuilding of the Tabernacle of David. James declared that this prophecy, is fulfilled in the Church, which consists of people from all races. Not only that, James quoted Amos as if the rebuilding of David's tent were occurring in his day – through the birth of the multinational Church. Those who declare that the rebuilding of the Tabernacle of David refers to a worship movement that developed in the later decades of the 20th Century are in disagreement with the apostles.

¹⁵⁷ Acts 15:14-21

James then gave his opinion and a suggestion:

1. The Jewish Christians should not trouble the Gentiles with Jewish Laws
2. A letter be written to the Gentile Churches, instructing them to
 - abstain from things contaminated by idols
 - abstain from fornication
 - abstain from things strangled
 - abstain from blood

The four things in the letter were consistent with Leviticus Chapters 17 & 18. One reason for abstaining from these things was the contact that they would have with Jewish believers throughout the Roman Empire. If they wanted to bring Christ to Jews, they should not do things that closed the door to conversation.

James' suggestion received approval by the gathering, although there probably was some opposition by the Pharisee (perhaps unexpressed). Even though Luke often is very brief in his reporting, he thought it important to preserve the very wording of this letter.

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.*¹⁵⁸

The phrase, *it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us*, indicated that they viewed their decision to be much more than something that had been decided by a church board.

They sent the letter back to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, accompanied by two of their most distinguished and trusted leaders, Silas and Judas. When they arrived in Antioch, they called an all-church meeting and read the letter to the congregation. The result was great rejoicing – perhaps a sigh of relief.

We do well to notice the two men who were sent along with the letter. Both were prophets. Silas became Paul's traveling companion on future missionary journeys. After the letter was read, these men encouraged the church by preaching a lengthy message. Even though the church released them to return to Jerusalem, Judas and Silas chose to remain on in Antioch and join Paul and Barnabas in preaching and teaching among the Gentile believers.

¹⁵⁸ Acts 15:23-29

Excursus

The Jerusalem Council asked the Gentile believers to abstain from three things that related to Old Testament precepts: *things sacrificed to idols, things strangled, and blood*. They added a fourth that seems to be merely a moral restriction: *fornication*. Why did the Jerusalem Council think it necessary to include this obvious moral restriction? The following article demonstrates the attitude of the Gentile world toward sexual matters. This thinking was so ingrained in the culture that “Gentile” implied a casual attitude in this area.

Marriage and Women in the Pagan World of Bible Times

Neaira lived in ancient Athens, about three hundred years before the birth of Christ. She was purchased as a child to be raised a *hetaira*, or high-class prostitute. For a while, Neaira “served” two unmarried men until it was time for them to settle down. Eventually, she bought her freedom and even married. However, she could not leave her dark days behind. Her greedy husband forced her into prostitution once more.¹⁵⁹ As a little girl who deserved the loving protection of a father, Neaira found herself instead groomed to be a sexual servant. Then, as a wife, she found herself forced into other men’s beds. Neaira’s situation was not particularly unique. Prostitution was common in ancient Greece.¹⁶⁰ This dark region desperately needed light.

Ancient Greece is just one of the societies that provided the context for the biblical world. Others include the ancient Near East, Rome, and, of course, ancient Israel. As historians and biblical scholars continue to study this period and these societies, it is increasingly clear, as Canadian evangelical Ken Campbell put it, “that influence seldom travels one way. All the societies . . . interacted from time to time with one another, sometimes in positive ways and sometimes negatively.”¹⁶¹ It is also clear, as the Bible is studied, that God’s people have always been commanded to take their cues not from the surrounding culture but from God’s holy Word—cues *not* only about how they are to *think* about the one, true God, but cues about how they are to live as God’s holy people. Several historical examples drive this point home:

- Most that is known about marriage and divorce in the ancient Near East is gathered from marriage contracts drawn up during betrothal periods. According to one Assyrian contract, a husband and wife could divorce by making a simple financial payment.¹⁶² Consider this a very ancient version of the “easy-divorce.”

¹⁵⁹ See S. M. Baugh, “Marriage and Family in Ancient Greek Society,” in *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World*, ed. Ken M. Campbell (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 105-107 and Allison Glazebrook, “The Bad Girls of Athens: The Image and Function of Hetairai in Judicial Oratory,” in *Prostitutes and Courtesans in the Ancient World*, eds. Christopher A. Faraone and Laura K. McClure (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 125-126.

¹⁶⁰ Allison Glazebrook, *Ibid.*, 130.

¹⁶¹ Ken M. Campbell, “Preface,” in *Marriage and Family*, xv.

¹⁶² Peter Coleman, *Christian Attitudes to Marriage: From Ancient Times to the Third Millennium* (London: SCM Press, 2004), 9. For example, the Assyrian couple, Laqipum and Hatala, agreed to the following stipulations in the nineteenth century BC: “Laqipum may not marry another woman, but in the city he may marry a hierodule [temple prostitute]. If within two years Hatala does not provide him with offspring, she herself will purchase a slave-woman. After she will have produced a child by him, he may dispose of her by sale. Should Laqipum choose to divorce Hatala he must pay her five minas of silver and should she choose to divorce him, she must pay him five minas of silver.”

- In Babylon, a husband’s commitment literally depended upon a woman’s health. In the event she was too ill to have sexual relations with her husband, Babylonian law permitted the husband to marry another—legalized polygamy.¹⁶³
- In Mesopotamia, a husband could divorce his wife for donating family property to an outsider. Even worse, he could shame her in the process by “literally stripping the woman naked and driving her from the house.”¹⁶⁴
- In the Roman world, men, both before they married and in their later years of life, were all but expected to have a concubine—a female companion to whom the man had no legal obligation.¹⁶⁵ A man might choose to marry his concubine or treat her as a sexual plaything to be discarded at a moment’s notice.
- Then there was the lasciviousness of ancient Greece, where it was not considered adultery for a married man to have relations with a *hetaira*, like Neaira, at a social event. Some husbands did not even bother to hide their liaisons with servant girls—such was the perversion of the culture.¹⁶⁶

The New Testament repudiated these prevailing practices. Jesus upheld the Father’s intention of the one-flesh union as the ultimate standard, declaring divorce and remarriage to be adultery in Mark 10. Paul inspired men to be the “the husband of one wife” (1 Tim. 3:2), implying all married men are to be devoted to their spouses only. Peter called husbands to “honor . . . the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life” (1 Pet. 3:7). As Greek and Roman men reveled in promiscuousness, leaving woman after broken woman behind in their wake, it is Paul who taught the Church the hard word that the sexually immoral will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-10) and who pointed the tempted away from lust and toward God’s ideal—marriage between a man and a woman (1 Cor. 7:2). No doubt, this would have been music to Neaira’s ears. Notice, it is the *Christian* Scriptures that demand commitment, that foster fidelity, that insist women can be valued as co-heirs of the Gospel, and that encourage sex in its proper context, marriage.

The next time Christianity is charged as a repressive, unenlightened, and backward religion, the critic should reconsider how repressive, unenlightened, and backward the world would be today, without the Christian defense of marriage.

<http://biblemesh.com/blog/marriage-and-women-in-the-pagan-world-of-bible-times>

¹⁶³ Victor H. Matthews, “Marriage and the Family in the Ancient Near East,” *Marriage and the Family*, 15.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 25

¹⁶⁵ Susan Treggiari, “Marriage and Family in the Roman Society” *Marriage and Family* 169-171

¹⁶⁶ Baugh, “Marriage and Family in Ancient Greek Society” *Marriage and Family* 116-117

PETER'S DEFECTION

Galatians 2:11-21

Although Ramsey makes a strong argument for this episode's occurring before the Jerusalem Council,¹⁶⁷ and Bruce assumes such, without giving any evidence,¹⁶⁸ I agree with Shepard's assessment,

“The narrative about the defection is placed by Paul in its logical connection, following the account of the Conference, which was brought on by the free Gospel preached by Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey... Ramsey presents some strong arguments for placing the defection of Peter before the Conference, but many other authorities prefer what seems to be the more logical and better attested order as given in Paul's narrative (Galatians 2:11-21).”¹⁶⁹

Conybeare and Howson, in their magisterial work, *The Life, Times, and Travels of St. Paul*, state,

“From the order of the narration in the Epistle to the Galatians, it is most natural to infer that the meeting at Antioch took place soon after the Council at Jerusalem. Some writers wish to make it anterior to the Council, from an unwillingness to believe that St. Peter would have acted in this manner after the Decree. But it is sufficient answer to the objection to say that his conduct was equally inconsistent with his own previous conduct in the case of Cornelius.”¹⁷⁰

Regardless of whether the event happened before or after the Jerusalem conference, Paul's point is the same. We present the event at this point in the narrative because that is the order in which Paul places it in his Galatian letter – this we assume to be the proper order.

It must have been some time after the Jerusalem conference that Peter decided to make a friendly visit to Antioch. Upon his arrival, he was overjoyed with the friendly reception that he received and quickly began to enter into the social life of the Antiochan Church. He ate with Gentiles as a Gentile, giving no thought to his former Jewish strictness.

The letter that the Jerusalem Church had sent to the Gentile churches addressed the conduct of Gentiles. However, it did not address the proper behaviour of Jewish Christians (who continued to keep the basics of the Mosaic Law and tradition), nor of the matter of interracial conduct and intercourse. Peter's defection at Antioch forced the issue to the forefront.

¹⁶⁷ W.M. Ramsey, D.C.L, LL.D., *St. Paul, the Traveler and Roman Citizen* (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House) 1945, pages 155-166

¹⁶⁸ F.F. Bruce, *Paul, Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans Publishing Co.) 1977, page 175

¹⁶⁹ J.W. Shepard, ThD., *The Life and Letters of St. Paul*, (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1950 Page 124

¹⁷⁰ W. J. Conybeare, M.A., J.S. Howson, M.A., *The Life, Times, and Travels of St. Paul* (New York, E.B. Treat & Co.) 1869

Evidently reports of Peter's behaviour reached Jerusalem and some of the more narrow Jewish believers came to Antioch to verify the reports. Upon arrival, they found the reports to be true and immediately began to rebuke the Jewish believers. Although the text says that they came from James, there is no hint that James sent them to be his spokesman. For that matter, in the conference James had agreed with Paul. In the letter that came out of the Jerusalem conference, James wrote,

Since we have heard that some of our number to whom we gave no instruction have disturbed you with their words, unsettling your souls,¹⁷¹

This being true, in all probability, although these had cleared the trip with James, it is doubtful that he sent them to straighten out Peter and the other Jewish Christians in Antioch.

The emissaries from Jerusalem began to declare anew the necessity of circumcision and Jewish separatism. The manner in which they spoke to Peter caused him to waver. In time he gradually¹⁷² withdrew from the practice of eating with the Gentiles as the Gentiles eat. "He seemed unable to resist the argument that Christians should follow the example of Jesus and the Twelve in keeping the whole law and 'living as the Jews.'"¹⁷³ The picture of Peter in this situation is in keeping with the picture presented of him in the Gospels. He often made extreme statements, then behaved to the contrary. For example, on the night of Our Lord's betrayal, Peter was enthusiastic in his statement of loyalty to Jesus,¹⁷⁴ but succumbed to peer pressure in the courtyard of the High Priest.¹⁷⁵ He manifested the same behavioural pattern at Antioch. He knew better, but could not stand up to the prejudice that was directed at him and the other Jewish Christians in Antioch.

he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision.¹⁷⁶

As a result of Peter's defection, Barnabas and all the other Jewish Christians in Antioch withdrew from social contact with Gentile Christians. When Paul saw the schism in the church resulting from Peter's defection, he stood up and boldly rebuked Peter, face to face.

But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, "If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews¹⁷⁷

Paul then presented the foundational truths of salvation by Grace, concluding with the wonderful statement of a life that is surrendered and abiding in grace,

¹⁷¹ Acts 15:24

¹⁷² ἀθώριζεν Imperfect tense, inceptive: *began separating*

¹⁷³ Shepard, page 125

¹⁷⁴ Matthew 26:33-35, 50-51; Mark 14:26-31, 46-47; Luke 22:33-34, 49-51; John 13:37-38; 18:10

¹⁷⁵ Luke 22:54-58;

¹⁷⁶ Galatians 2:12

¹⁷⁷ Galatians 2:14

*I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.*¹⁷⁸

Shepard aptly comments,

“The pertinent aim of Paul, which was apparent to all, was to secure Gentile liberty, to maintain the Christian unity in the church in Antioch, and to lay down the conditions which would secure the same unity in all the Gentile churches everywhere. Peter’s agreement in the Conference to a policy of comity had been violated by this mistaken example he had set, in withdrawing from the fellowship of the Gentiles, thus forcing them to Judaize.”¹⁷⁹

Paul does not record Peter’s response to the rebuke, but from other scriptural references, it is clear that they were not estranged from one another. Peter evidently took the rebuke to heart. This encounter established thenceforth the Church’s official position on race relations, even though Judaizers did continue to plague some of the churches.

Paul and Barnabas Part Company

Acts 15:36-39

This event must have been one of the saddest scenes in Paul’s life. Yet, it is not totally sad, because great good came out of the disagreement.

It began with Paul’s worthy suggestion that he and Barnabas visit the churches that had come into existence during their first missionary venture into Pamphylia and Pisidia. Barnabas immediately welcomed the idea. He suggested that they take John Mark with them, even as they had on their first mission. Evidently John Mark, who had returned to Jerusalem after his abandonment of the team on the first missionary trip, had come back to Antioch with the post-conference delegation. It is possible, even probable, that Barnabas had stayed in John Mark’s mother’s home during that conference – after all, they were his family.

Paul’s response to Barnabas’ suggestion was negative. The language indicates that there was an extended exchange¹⁸⁰ between them.

*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.*¹⁸¹

Barnabas and Saul had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company

*And there occurred such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus.*¹⁸²

¹⁷⁸ Galatians 2:20

¹⁷⁹ Shepard, page 126

¹⁸⁰ Indicative Imperfect active, ἠξίου implying an ongoing situation – literally, *Paul was not thinking ...*. The language in the KJV *Paul thought it not good*, and the NIV *Paul did not think it wise*, do not convey accurately this subtlety of the Greek.

¹⁸¹ Acts 15:38

This account often is viewed as an embarrassing record of behaviour between two stalwarts of the faith – could they not have reconciled their disagreement, as brothers? There is another way to look at the situation. This is the record of two men who were faithful to their respective callings. Here were two men, completely sold out to God, who found their different callings in conflict.

Initially, Paul had been teamed with Barnabas, who was an esteemed patriarch of the faith in Jerusalem. God had put them together as a team for a lengthy season, while Paul fully gained credibility and experience. The time had come for the team to dissolve. The hand of God can be seen in this situation.

- Paul’s primary call was to evangelize the Gentiles.
- Barnabas primary call was to be an encourager, a comforter, an exhorter – to build up people, even as he had done with Saul.

The conflict over John Mark brought this to a head. Paul needed a team of dependable men. John Mark’s early behaviour had caused Paul to lose trust in him. Paul could not afford to have someone on the team in which he did not have full trust. Barnabas, on the other hand, felt responsible to work with John Mark and enable him to be all that he had the potential to be, in Christ Jesus.

- Paul was faithful to his calling.
- Barnabas was faithful to his calling.

Neither was wrong. Both were right. Yet, they could not fulfill their callings together. So, they separated and each achieved his purpose. After the split-up, Paul wrote favorably of his old friend, Barnabas.¹⁸³

Barnabas was very successful with John Mark.

- In later years, during Paul’s first imprisonment, John Mark was his companion in prison.¹⁸⁴
- In the last letter that Paul wrote, when he was facing execution, he urged Timothy to bring John Mark to him because Mark was profitable for ministry.¹⁸⁵
- At a later time, Peter described Mark as his son.¹⁸⁶
- The Gospel of Mark was dictated to Mark by Peter.

¹⁸² Acts 15:39 The term describing the intensity of their disagreement is *παροξυσμός* (*paroxusmos*) from which is derived the English word, *paroxysm*, (a sudden convulsion or outburst; a fit; a sudden attack or sudden intensification of symptoms)

¹⁸³ I Corinthians 9:6, written years after the split-up, reflects Paul’s continued esteem for Barnabas. The events of Galatians 2, even though they are mixed in Barnabas’ behaviour, still show Paul’s esteem for his friend, and surprise at his joining Peter in the defection. Paul commended Mark to the Colossians (Colossians 4:10) as a relative of Barnabas [the same Greek word is used for *nephew* and *cousin* therefore the Colossians passage can be interpreted by either of these terms]

¹⁸⁴ Colossians 4:10; Philemon 24

¹⁸⁵ II Timothy 4:11

¹⁸⁶ I Peter 5:13

Even though Barnabas faded from the scene after his split-up with Paul, his presence continued to be felt in the church through John Mark, whom he mentored to maturity and stability in the faith – even to the point that Mark shared imprisonment with Paul.

Barnabas and John Mark returned to Barnabas' hometown in Cyprus. There, surrounded by his relatives and mentored by his uncle Barnabas, John Mark grew to be the man of God that he had the potential to be.

Shepard makes a fitting comment on the parting of these two giants of the faith,

“The two great missionaries, who had made such a fine record together on the first missionary journey, would never more be associated intimately in the work; but they agreed to disagree and the one missionary stream was separated into two, destined to refresh the souls of many thousands with the water of life.”¹⁸⁷

The Second Missionary Journey

Acts 15:40 – 18:22

Acts 15:40-41

An important gift of missionary leaders is the ability to understand people and to recognize their strengths and weaknesses. Paul wisely chose Silas, whose Latin name was Silvanus.¹⁸⁸

. Silas had many things to commend him for the team.

- He was a Hebrew¹⁸⁹
- He was a Roman citizen¹⁹⁰
- His ministry at Antioch had demonstrated his character
- Through Peter's temporary defection, he had experienced the resolution of social issues between Jew and Gentile.
- He had chosen to remain in the freer and mixed congregation at Antioch, rather than returning to Jerusalem, when given permission to do so.
- He was highly respected, both in Jerusalem and in Antioch.
- Having attended the Jerusalem Conference, he could attest to the correctness of the letter that Paul brought to the Gentiles
- He was a prophet

Ramsay points out that Luke's variation in the use of singular and plural verbs indicates Paul's training of Silas. At the beginning of the narrative of their ministry, Paul alone is the subject of the narrative. After a time, the plural language begins, but in certain situations, Paul again

¹⁸⁷ Shepard, page 130

¹⁸⁸ I Thessalonians 1:1; II Thessalonians 1:1

¹⁸⁹ Acts 15:22 Silas is described as one of the chief men among the brethren at Jerusalem, chosen to speak for the Jerusalem church concerning Jewish/Gentile regulations. All of this points to his being an Hebrew, else his credentials would not have been impressive on this issue

¹⁹⁰ Acts 16:37

dominates the narrative. Paul trusted Silas with more responsibility as he grew in ability and demonstrated his understanding of the plans and methods of Spirit-led ministry.¹⁹¹

The Church in Antioch gave its blessing to Paul and Silas as they departed on their journey. Luke does not record any such blessing's being given to Barnabas and Mark. They seemed to have quietly left Antioch for Cyprus.

The team traveled north through Syria, then turned west into Cilicia. They probably traveled through Paul's hometown of Tarsus. It also is probable that they would have encountered believers in the region who had come to Christ during Paul's earliest evangelistic activity. (see pages 48-51). Luke passes quickly over the visit to the churches in Syria and Cilicia (Acts 15:41). We can speculate, but not know, how long Paul lingered in his home town of Tarsus. Needless to say, he and Silas would have encouraged all of the brethren that they encountered in this portion of their journey.

The team journeyed north to the Taurus Mountain pass known as, "The Cilician Gates." After crossing the mountains they turned south, following the foot of the mountain range to the city of Derbe,¹⁹² where the first missionary trip had ended. Derbe and Lystra constituted a region in the Province of Galatia. Luke also passes over any ministry in Derbe (he had but a very brief summary of ministry in that city on the first missionary trip). No doubt the letter from Jerusalem was read in the churches.

The team moved on to Lystra. Again, other than the delivery of the letter, nothing is mentioned of the ministry there. However, an important event did occur at Lystra. Here they found Timothy, who became the third member of their team.

Timothy's mother, Eunice, and maternal grandmother, Lois, were pious Jewish Christians.¹⁹³ His father was a Greek. No mention is made of his father's faith, or lack thereof. Because of the manner in which Timothy's father is mentioned but unnamed, and no mention made of him later, it is possible that he was deceased. Timothy may have come to faith during the first missionary trip, when the citizens of Lystra attempted to worship Paul and Barnabas, then later stoned Paul, leaving him for dead. Timothy may have witnessed Paul's stoning and miraculous recovery, during that visit.

For certain, he had been a believer for an extended period of time, because he had developed an admirable reputation among the believers in the region. Because his father was a Greek, Timothy had not been circumcised on the eighth day after his birth. Since Paul intended to evangelize in the region, and since there were many Jews in the region, he had Timothy circumcised. By doing so, Timothy's presence on the team would not be an hindrance. This is in contrast to Paul's refusal to allow Titus to be circumcised at the Jerusalem conference. In Jerusalem, Paul was taking a stand for Christian liberty. With Timothy, Paul was doing all that

¹⁹¹ Acts 16:4; 17:2 W.M. Ramsay, *Paul the Traveler and Roman Citizen*, page 176, 177

¹⁹² Derbe was a major city, often mentioned in ancient writings. It was a tax collecting point for the Roman Empire. Today, the city is gone, but W.M. Ramsey, in 1907 identified the mound before the mountain peak Badji Abba, in Turkey, as the site of Derbe.

¹⁹³ II Timothy 1:5

he could to remove any walls that might stand between him and the Jews whom he hoped to win to Christ.

Paul later referred to an impartation to Timothy that must have taken place at this time.

*be not careless of the gift in thee, that was given thee through prophecy, with laying on of the hands of the eldership;*¹⁹⁴

*For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.*¹⁹⁵

Although there is no narrative record of when this impartation took place, it is most reasonable to assume that when Timothy was being released by the Lystra/Iconium Church, and being added to the missionary team, the local elders, along with Paul and Silas, laid hands on Timothy. During that ceremony, prophetic words came forth concerning the nature of Timothy's future. Supernatural gifts were imparted to him at that time.

Timothy took the role that John Mark should have taken on the first missionary journey. Throughout the trip, when conflict with unbelievers arose, Paul and Silas were the focus of conflict. Paul and Silas went to jail in Philippi. Timothy and Luke did not.

They passed through the region, probably visiting each church that had been established during the first missionary trip, and moved on toward the west coast of Asia Minor, probably aiming for Ephesus. However, such was not God's plan. The Holy Spirit forbade them to preach as they left Antioch of Pisidia and headed west. Being forbidden to preach in the west, they turned north and traveled through sparsely occupied Mysia, planning to go to Bithynia, near the Black Sea. However, the Holy Spirit blocked them once again. They turned to the port city of Troas and sought direction from the Holy Spirit.

While they waited in Troas for some sense of the Spirit's direction, Paul experienced a night vision. Whether the vision came as a dream when Paul was asleep, or if the vision came in one of Paul's all-night prayer meetings,¹⁹⁶ we cannot say. In the vision he saw a man standing before him, dressed in Macedonian attire and having the physical appearance of a Macedonian. The man appealed to him, saying, *Come over to Macedonia and help us.* Immediately, the team deduced that God had chosen Europe as the next arena for Gospel proclamation. This vision was as real as the ones that Paul had experienced at the time of his conversion and later in the Temple in Jerusalem.

Greece consisted of two regions, Macedonia in the north and Achaia in the south. Before this journey was over, Paul and the team would evangelize both regions.

The change of pronouns between Acts 16: 8 and Acts 16: 10, catches our attention. **They**, came down to Troas. **We** sought to go to Macedonia. Obviously, it was at this point that Luke became a member of the missionary band, which now numbered at least four. From this point on, Luke was a member of the team and an observer of many of the events that he recorded. Prior to this time, Luke had relied on Paul and others to relate to him all that had transpired. Luke became the great historian of primitive Christianity.

¹⁹⁴ I Timothy 1:14 YLT

¹⁹⁵ II Timothy 1:6 NAS

¹⁹⁶ II Corinthians 6:5; 11:27

The team immediately boarded a ship for Macedonia. They sailed northwest. The winds were favorable. On the first day they passed the island of Samothracia. The next day, continuing in a northeasterly direction, they arrived at the port city of Neapolis (now name Kavala). Olaf Moe describes the huge import of this moment.

“The four missionaries, then, in the port of Troas sought to obtain passage accommodation to Macedonia. The world had no idea what future and what hope were enclosed within the ship that cared them over to Europe; indeed, the four men themselves could scarcely imagine what a transformation this fact was to produce in the spiritual development of a whole continent – a campaign of Alexander, in reverse.”¹⁹⁷

Neapolis is located in the northeastern corner of Macedonia (the western side of the Hellespont). After disembarking, they walked ten miles up the Gaggites (also spelled, *Gangites*) River to the city of Philippi, which was a Roman colony and the chief city of that portion of Macedonia. Philippi had been established by Alexander the Great and named after his father, Philip of Macedonia. It was founded as a center for mining the silver and gold of the region. Augustus Caesar, after the battle of Actium 31 BC, moved a large number of retired combat veterans to Philippi and set them up as a part of their pension. Because it was a first-level colony, its citizens were Roman citizens who had the privilege of voting in Roman elections. Because most of its citizens had come from Italy, Philippi was more Roman than Greek. In the inscriptions there are ten times more Roman names than Greek. The city had a community financed Latin language theatre. Philippi had a Roman type of local government, with a liberal constitution. Two annually replaced praetors (“the two men”) were at the head of the city administration. As the insignia of their dignity they were accompanied by two lictors (bearers of fasces¹⁹⁸) on public occasions. All of this was a reflection of Roman culture. Philippi also was a center from which major roads radiated. Thus, it was a perfect place to begin the evangelization of Europe. There was a small Jewish population in the city, but no Jewish synagogue.

Philippi: Acts 16:13-40

The missionary team spent part of a week in the city. On the Sabbath, since there was no synagogue, they went outside the city to the riverbank. It was a custom in ancient times when there was no synagogue in a city, for Jews to have worship services at the riverbank. One of the reasons for this was the ease whereby sacred washings could take place, prior to worship.

Paul and his companions were not disappointed. They found a group of Jewish women gathered for worship. One of the leaders of the group was Lydia, a saleswoman from Thyatira. Thyatira was a city of Asia Minor, in the region that Paul and his companions had been prevented from evangelizing. The city of Thyatira was well known for its dyeing, especially for its purple dye. Purple dyed materials from Thyatira were very expensive and in some cultures were reserved for those of the ruling class. Judging by her product, Lydia had a first-class business. She obviously was a woman of means, owning her own home. In Macedonia, as contrasted with Jewish

¹⁹⁷ Olaf Moe, *The Apostle Paul*, (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House) 1950, page 260

¹⁹⁸ A bundle of rods bound around an axe with the blade projecting – carried before Roman magistrates as a symbol of authority.

society, women were accorded special privileges and authority. Lydia probably was either a single woman, or a widow, since no mention is made of a husband.

As was stated concerning the action of God in the conversions that took place in Pisidian Antioch,¹⁹⁹ God's initiative is mentioned in the conversion of Lydia,

*A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.*²⁰⁰

Lydia and her household accepted the Gospel and were immersed. Some have argued for the immersion of infants on the basis of this and other household conversions. However, the assumption that the household contained infants is presumptuous. A business woman from Thyatira, doing business in Philippi with a household that no doubt consisted, at least in part, of servants and employees, with possibly some relatives, may or may not have had infants in the home.

The history of Christianity in Europe begins with the story of a group of women who were seeking God by a riverside. Lydia demonstrated her whole hearted entrance into the Kingdom by insisting that the entire missionary band use her home as their residence and base of operations. Her home became the temporary meeting place for the little church. In many ways, this church became the loveliest and dearest to Paul's heart. In the sunset years of his life, when Paul was confined in Lamertine prison, this was the only church that sent someone to encourage him, and to bring money to lighten his suffering. The epistle that he wrote to this church from his prison cell reflects the special relationship that existed between them.

The missionaries kept up their ministry at the river. They probably spoke at the riverside during the day and met in Lydia's home at night. In addition to Lydia, earlier converts probably included Euodia, Syntche, Clement, and Epaphroditus, all mentioned by name in Paul's letter to the church.

One of the surest ways to arose hostility, is to touch someone's money. This axiom was demonstrated many times during the missionary journeys. In Philippi, the problem arose over the deliverance of a slave girl.

There was in the city a slave girl, whose owners made a fine profit from her fortune telling. She was possessed by the *spirit of divination*.

*It happened that as we were going to the place of prayer, a slave-girl having a spirit of divination met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortune-telling.*²⁰¹

The Greek term translated, *divination*, is πύθων (*pythown* from which is derived the English, *python*). This was the name of the demon which Greeks believed inhabited a ventriloquist.²⁰²

¹⁹⁹ Acts 13:48 *as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.*

²⁰⁰ Acts 16:14

²⁰¹ Acts 16:16

Because of this mysterious ability, and the unusual voice manifested in ventriloquism a ventriloquist often was regarded as a soothsayer. Whether or not this slave girl was a ventriloquist, she did possess unusual powers. Her masters (more than one owned her – possibly a family) made substantial profit from her fortune-telling.

As the four missionaries traveled from Lydia's house to their daily preaching point, this woman followed them and cried out, over and over, *These men are slaves of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation.* The title, *Most High God*, is the same one uttered by Legion, who possessed the Gadarene demoniac.²⁰³ She repeated this behaviour every day for several days. Satan is clever. Those who are not spiritually minded would welcome such free public relations testimony. After all, the woman was respected as a fortune teller – one who could exercise unnatural powers of knowledge. If she endorsed the preachers, people would listen to her – and then to them. By such an endorsement, Satan was seeking to confuse the clear line of demarcation between demonic activity and the supernatural activity of a Holy God. Paul initially ignored the woman and put up with the annoyance of her behaviour. However, after a few days, he either humanly wearied of her annoyance or the Holy Spirit directed him to respond.

*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.*²⁰⁴

We have to wonder why Paul tolerated the woman as long as he did, knowing that a demon was involved in the situation. Perhaps it was because he knew that the slave's owners would begin to seek to hinder the Gospel.

The expected reaction of the slave's owners took place. When the woman no longer had the ability to tell fortunes, her masters lost their source of income. Angrily, they grabbed Paul and Silas (note that Timothy and Luke were exempt) and dragged them to the *agora*. Every city had an open space at the town center, which was a farmers' market as well as the place where civic events and trials took place. Their accusation before the two praetors was designed to stir up the Roman citizens. Of course, the charges were not accurate, but lynchings throughout the history of mankind demonstrate that prejudice doesn't require evidence.

*and when they had brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, "These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews, and are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans."*²⁰⁵

In almost every age and in every culture, for different reasons, Anti-Semitism has lain beneath the surface of society. Earlier in the year, Emperor Claudius had ordered the expulsion of Jews from Rome. Thus, throughout the empire, Anti-Semitic sentiment had been stirred up. As a result of the inflammatory statements made by the slave's owners, the crowd became a mob,

²⁰² The history of the term is quite complex. It begins with the myth of the large snake, *πύθων*, that guarded the Delphic oracle. According to the tale, Apollo slew the snake. However, the image of the snake continued to be displayed at Delphi. Some believed that the odor of the decaying snake imparted spiritual powers to Delphi.

²⁰³ Mark 5:7

²⁰⁴ Acts 16:18

²⁰⁵ Acts 16:20-21

rising up against Paul and Silas. The praetors tore off the outer garments of the two missionaries and ordered that they be beaten with rods. Paul probably tried to inform them of his and Silas' Roman citizenship, which would have made such a beating illegal, but the crowd would have been in no mood to listen. After the lictors had given the two missionaries a bloody beating, the praetors ordered them to prison, with instructions to the jailer to guard them securely. He carried out his orders by placing them in the innermost chamber of the prison and also securing their feet in stocks. A stock was an instrument of torture that had holes for the wrists, ankles, and neck, but only the missionaries' feet were placed in the stocks.

Neither the chains, the stocks, nor their painful wounds could stifle the spirits of the two. They rejoiced that they had been permitted to suffer for the name of Christ. The other prisoners heard something that they never before had heard in a prison – singing and praying, probably verses from the Psalms.

Suddenly, at midnight a great earthquake occurred. The doors of the prison were opened; the chains which held various prisoners shackled to the wall, fell off; gaping holes were left between the stones of the prison; the missionaries were freed from the stocks. According to Roman law, if a soldier were assigned to guard a prisoner, and that prisoner escaped, the soldier was executed. The jailor, being shaken out of his sleep, saw the situation and assumed that he had lost all of his prisoners. He drew his sword and planned to commit suicide, when Paul cried out to him, *Do yourself no harm, for we are all here!*

The jailor quickly called for lights and went into the dark prison, where he fell before Paul and Silas. Evidently, he had heard the preaching of the two, prior to the mob arrest, because he asked a question that only could have come from such knowledge, *What must I do to be saved?*

Paul and Silas replied, *believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household.* They took the time necessary to explain the Gospel to him and all who were in his house. Two washings followed – he washed their wounds, and they immersed him and all of those who were in his house. The comments made earlier (page 77) concerning infant baptism in the home of Lydia apply here as well. There is a stronger case against infant baptism's having occurred in this episode because Luke records, *having believed in God with his whole household.* Since everyone in his household believed, that would exclude those too young to believe.

The next morning, for unexplained reasons, the praetors sent word to release the prisoners. One textual family (the occidental text) reads, *when it was day, the praetors came together in the agora, and when they recalled the earthquake which had occurred, they became afraid and sent the lictors....* Whatever the reason for the decision, the praetors sent the order to release the two men and, hopefully, they would leave town. However, it was not that simple. Paul played the trump card of Roman citizenship.

But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us in public without trial, men who are Romans, and have thrown us into prison; and now are they sending us away secretly? No indeed! But let them come themselves and bring us out."³⁸ The policemen reported these words to the chief magistrates. They were afraid when they heard that they were Romans,²⁰⁶

²⁰⁶ Acts 16:37-38

Paul knew that if he and Silas left the city, branded as criminals and rabble rousers, the congregation would be treated the same way. Also, future missionary activity in the region would be hampered, if the progenitors had been criminals and trouble-making vagabonds.

The praetors, realizing that they were in serious trouble, having violated basic Roman law, came to Paul and Silas and pled with them to leave the city without making any trouble. Having received a public apology, the two joined Timothy and Luke in the home of Lydia, where they had a meeting to encourage the new body of believers. Then they left Philippi for their next evangelistic crusade.

In the following narrative, Luke no longer uses the first person pronouns, *we* and *us*, which he had employed since Troas. At this point in the narrative, he reverts to the third person pronouns, *he* and *they*. This indicates that Luke remained behind in Philippi and did not rejoin Paul until the journey to Jerusalem,²⁰⁷ remaining with him through his imprisonment. Since the third person pronouns had been used for Paul and Silas in the immediate context, some argue that for a season, Timothy also remained in Philippi, joining Paul and Silas later in the mission.²⁰⁸ This is a possibility, since no mention is made of Timothy until Paul and Silas were in Berea.²⁰⁹ In the Philippian letter, we find this church fully equipped with elders and deacons. In all probability, Luke, and possibly Timothy, remained in Philippi to guide the church through its initial organizational phase.

Thessalonica: Acts 17:1-9

Leaving Philippi, Paul and Silas traveled south on the Egnatian Way. The *Via Egnatia* was a major military road which led all the way from Byzantium (S-T 13 on Paul's World Map) to Dyrrachium (J 12 on Paul's World Map) with a southern leg running from Philippi south toward Achaia. After traveling about about 30 miles they reached the Strymon River (present day Neochori) which flowed in a double canal at this point, hence the name of the city, Amphipolis. Amphipolis, considerably bigger than Philippi, was the largest city of the region. The team probably spent the night at Amphipolis, but they did not engage in any evangelistic work. They then pressed on south and west for about 30 more miles, to the smaller city of Apollonia (now Pollina). They probably remained in Apollonia only one night and the next morning pressed on for 35 miles to reach the city of Thessalonica. There was no large Jewish population in either of the cities through which they had passed.

It seems that Thessalonica was their goal, given the manner in which they had bypassed significant populations in Amphipolis and Apollonia. We must assume that the Holy Spirit led them in this manner, but a natural explanation was the large Jewish population and a significant synagogue in Thessalonica which provided a ready arena for their preaching.

²⁰⁷ Acts 20:5

²⁰⁸ J. W. McGarvey, *Acts of the Apostles* (Cincinnati, Standard Publishing Company) 1892, page 109

²⁰⁹ Acts 17:14

Upon arriving in the city, the team probably became acquainted with some members of the Jewish colony, including Jason, who became was their host. Most scholars consider this Jason to be the same believer whom Paul in his Roman letter called a “kinsman.”²¹⁰

While not occupied with preaching the Gospel, Paul plied his trade of tent making, in order to provide finances for the trip. He was determined to not allow anyone to level the charge that he was a “professional religionist,” but set an example of self-denying faithfulness.²¹¹ Of note is the fact that the leader of the team is the one who worked to provide the income, rather than lesser members of the team. The beloved little church in Philippi sent offerings to help with the finances while the team was in Thessalonica.²¹²

For three Sabbath Days, Paul taught in the synagogue. He pointed out the many prophecies that foretold the Messiah, his death, and resurrection. There was significant success among all parts of society: Jews, Greek Jewish proselytes, and many leading women of the city. Again, it is noteworthy that Luke records that leading women became believers. The usual animosity of the Jewish synagogue leaders began to be displayed. The Jewish leaders did not try to refute the teaching. They were stirred to jealousy when they saw how their proselytes and especially the wives of prominent men were attracted to the doctrines presented by the missionaries.

Several things indicate that Paul and Silas spent a significant amount of time in Thessalonica. First, the fact that Philippi sent offerings to the team more than once, while in Thessalonica, would indicate that they were there for more than just three or four weeks. Second, is the wider influence that they had among the Greeks, after they ceased their labors in the synagogue. They would have had to have been active for an extended time in order for this to be true. In I Thessalonians, Chapters 1 & 2, Paul describes a work that had to have encompassed more than just three weeks in the synagogue and a short labor among the Greeks.

The synagogue leaders went to the agora and stirred up a mob – possibly with bribes – to storm the house of Jason and demand that he give up missionaries. For some reason, the team had gone somewhere else – they weren’t home. In frustration, the mob, led by the Jewish leaders, pulled Jason and other believers before the *politarchs* and leveled a charge that the missionaries had been propagating a revolutionary political agenda. It is important to note the term that Luke used for the city magistrates. The term, *politarch*, is not found anywhere else in Greek literature. Those who challenge the veracity of Scripture would love to attack Acts on this bases, EXCEPT...in Thessalonica there is an ancient triumphal arch of marble which spanned the principal street of the city. On this arch is found this very title with the list of the *politarchs* who had ruled the city. There are seven names, three of which are Sosipater, Secundus, and Gaius, the names of three who became companions of Paul.²¹³ Evidently, some in the city government became Followers of the Way. When the arch was torn down, the British counsel, then at Thessalonica, secured the slabs and they now are in display at the British Museum.

²¹⁰ Romans 16:21.

²¹¹ I Thessalonians 2:9; II Thessalonians 3:8-10

²¹² Philippians 4:15-16

²¹³ Acts 19:29

Note that in Philippi, the Romans argued that it was not appropriate for Jews to promulgate Jewish customs in the city. In Thessalonica, the Jews pretended to be very loyal Roman subjects and accused their own countrymen of rebellion. The charges leveled in Thessalonica betrayed the highest hopes of the Jews – a Messiah – as being a rebellious hope.

The politarchs demonstrated wisdom. They did not take one side or the other. They quelled the disturbance by the mildest action that they could take. Jason and the others were released after putting up a bond which they would forfeit if the missionary team's presence caused further unrest in the city.

Berea: Acts 17:10-14

Immediately after the above reported incident, the Thessalonian believers reluctantly hustled the team out of town under the cover of darkness. They traveled southwest over a swampy road, that frequently crossed flooded rivers. First they came to Pella, about 28 miles from Thessalonica. They then turned south to Berea, about 12 miles from Pella.²¹⁴

There was a significant synagogue in Berea. No doubt the team was weary after their rigorous 40 mile trek²¹⁵ from Thessalonica, but as soon as possible, they went to the synagogue. The preachers were well received at the synagogue. Luke describes the Berean Jews favorably

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.²¹⁶

As a result of their diligent listening and scriptural studies, many Jews as well as prominent Greek men and women came to be believers.

No Bereans attacked the missionaries. However, when word got back to Thessalonica that the Gospel was producing a harvest in Berea, Thessalonian Jewish leaders hurried to Berea. They knew how to stir up a mob and using their well-practiced tactics began to cause trouble for the preachers.

A company of Bereans escorted Paul to Athens, where he would be safe from the Jewish attacks. Silas and Timothy remained behind in Berea to help stabilize the new church. Paul asked his escorts to return to Berea and to tell Silas and Timothy to join him as soon as possible.

Athens: Acts 17:16-34

While waiting in Athens for his companions, Paul walked around the city for a few days. He became grieved over the many idols in Athens, which was the intellectual center of the ancient

²¹⁴ Berea is the present day Verria (in later times, Berea was written, *Berroea*, with the accent on the first syllable).

²¹⁵ Some geographies indicate larger distances. J. W. McGarvey, for example (page 114), says that the journey was closer to 60 miles.

²¹⁶ Acts 17:11

world. Athens had been transformed into a university city, similar to modern Oxford. Cicero, Brutus, Antonius, Horace, and other prominent thinkers and writers had studied at Athens. Like many intellectual establishments, Athens seemed always to choose the losing side. It had declared itself in favor of Pompey over Caesar, Anthony over Octavius (losing causes). The city erected statues to Brutus and Cassius (losers). The city was deeply rooted in paganism. Petroneus stated that it was easier to meet a god in Athens than it was to meet a man. It was a city of statues of famous men and gods. On the surface, this city of philosophers did not promise to be very good soil for the simple Gospel of salvation through the resurrected Christ.

Once again, Paul entered the synagogue as an arena for the Gospel. Luke does not record how much success or failure Paul had in the synagogue. Luke's attention is focused on Paul's experience in the Gentile community in Athens.

In addition to speaking to the Jews and proselytes in the synagogue, Paul also spoke daily in the agora. Speaking in the agora was a common practice. Anyone who wanted to make a speech, recite poetry, do slight of hand tricks, or anything else that required an audience did so in the agora. Various philosophers and orators availed themselves of this arena. This is the place where Socrates had used the conversational method to promote his philosophies. Paul was in an appropriate element to present theology to the crowd. Here we see another evidence of Paul's ability to adapt. In Philippi, he went to the place of prayer by the river. In Ephesus (later), he went to the school of Tyrannus. In the city of Socrates he discussed moral and religious questions in the market place.

Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers who lectured in the agora began to dialogue with Paul. Many philosophies were espoused in the Agora: the Stoics (whose origin was in the nearby school of Zeno), Epicurus (whose nearby gardens were the site of Epicurean delights), the Academicians (followers of Plato), the Peripatetics (followers of Aristotle), Cynics (who were the most popular) and many different eclectics. Paul's message was something that they had not heard before. Paul did not engage in any philosophical discussion of their mutually controversial questions, but kept to his own field and preached Jesus Christ and his resurrection.

Paul's teaching was intriguing to the sophists who were always trying to hear something new. That was their intellectual entertainment. Thus, it is apparent that their interest was not spiritually motivated, but rather motivated by intellectual curiosity. This was the difficult problem that Paul faced, and the reason for the slight effect that his preaching had on the audience.

The philosophers asked Paul to speak at the Areopagus, the place where the elite dialogued and where the Areopagus council was invested with the authority to guard the religion and morals of the city. This council could summon to the city teachers whom they desired for their schools, or expel from the city teachers whom they considered dangerous. This was a historical moment without parallel. The apostle not only spoke in the agora of Athens, but also in the midst of the time-honored assembly of the Areopagus and with a multitude of people outside listening as he preached the Word of God to the Athenians who were so proud of their worldly wisdom. After enduring the disconnected conversations in the agora, Paul must have been delighted to have an audience that had assembled for the express purpose of hearing him.

McGarvey points out that Paul's speech had three topics:²¹⁷

1. First, to make the idolators acquainted with the true God
2. Second, to call on them to repent
3. Third, to present Christ as the One through whom they might obtain forgiveness of sins. (this part is incomplete because he was interrupted by the impatience and mockery of the hearers).

Of special note is the accolade that Paul lays on the Athenians,

So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects."²¹⁸

The term rendered, "religious," is *δεισιδαιμων* (*deisidaimon*). This is a neutral term which can be understood as praise, or blame, depending on the circumstances in which it is used. Clearly, here it is meant as a compliment. Athenians prided themselves as being very diligent to respect the various deities. The city not only was filled with altars and temples, but of note is one dedicated to the *unknown god*. Although the Greeks and Romans believed in a panoply of gods, there was a sense among many that behind all of these there was/is a being so distant that He could not be known. Using this as a springboard, Paul declares to them the Jewish-Christian view of God, as contrasted with the Greek-pagan view.

Most Greek religions held that matter is eternal and that the gods had only shaped it (Stoics) or that a cosmos had emerged out of chaos by an accidental combination of atoms (Epicureans). Paul declared that God created the world and all that is in it. In his sermon, he made statements that some of the leading philosophers would agree with.

- The Stoics would have agreed that He who is Lord of heaven and earth does not dwell in temples.
- The Epicureans would have agreed that God is not helpfully served through all kinds of sacrifices by human hands.

However, when Paul spoke of the common origin of the human race, he found no agreement in the assembly. The Greeks believed that each race had descended from various original men, called, *autochthons*. Paul then quoted one of their poets, who stated that all mankind is the offspring of God.²¹⁹

He then pointed out the folly of idolatry and that God had allowed such ignorance but now commanded all men to repent. McGarvey comments on this portion of the sermon,

"The soul-stirring fact that God has *appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness*, is a powerful motive for repentance, because a judgment in righteousness must inevitably involve the condemnation of all the unrighteous; and Paul's hearers could now see the unrighteousness of their idolatry."²²⁰

²¹⁷ McGarvey, page 130

²¹⁸ Acts 17:22

²¹⁹ From time to time in his speeches and writing, Paul displayed a knowledge of the intellectual literature of his day. This quote is from the *Phenomena of Aratus*. It is repeated into other Greek poetic works.

²²⁰ McGarvey, page 129

One must question McGarvey's statement, "Paul's hearers could now see the unrighteousness of their idolatry." Although Paul had presented the case well, there is no evidence that most of the audience were convinced. McGarvey makes a more accurate statement later in his comments on Paul's sermon,

"The terrors of that great day, and of the awful fate awaiting those who shall then be condemned, constitute the heavy artillery of the gospel, by which the fortification that sin has constructed about the hearts of wicked men must be battered down, ere the tender motives of the gospel can be brought to bear. The wicked man must be afraid to continue in sin, before the goodness of God can lead him to repentance; and the preacher of the gospel who neglects to employ the thunders of this heavenly artillery not only fails to preach according to the divine model, but he will preach a feeble gospel that can never work deep seated repentance."²²¹

Paul then spoke of the judge of all, the one whom God had ordained, and who had been raised from the dead. Paul did not get a chance to mention Jesus' name. The speech was interrupted abruptly at this point by vocal mocking of some of the audience. The Epicureans would have mocked and the Stoics would politely have said, "We will hear you again about this matter." They were willing to listen with open minds until the resurrection was mentioned.

Some fundamentalists and conservative writers criticize Paul's speech as being too intellectual. They point out his comments to the Corinthians:

*And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.*²²²

The critics of Paul's speech, say that the passage in I Corinthians proves that Paul arrived in Corinth chagrined. He had learned his lesson in Athens. The speech had been too philosophical and for that reason it had produced less fruit than his preaching at Corinth. This really doesn't fit the facts. In Athens, Paul preached the simple Gospel of Christ as far as he could. He was moving toward the cross, but was interrupted before he was able to preach that important truth. He could not have begun at that point, because his audience would have had no idea what he was talking about. As one mission scholar has said,

"If Paul had begun by preaching the Crucified Christ instead of leading these pagans to Him by a wise approach, it would not have been divine wisdom, but

²²¹ McGarvey page 129

²²² I Corinthians 2:1-5

human foolishness, the surest method of blocking the access to the hearts of his hearers.”²²³

Furthermore, the approach that Paul used in Romans 1-2 confirms the idea that Paul not only in Athens but after Athens used the same approach in preaching to pagans.

Another point to consider is the completeness with which Luke recorded the speech. In Acts 13 Luke recorded a rather full record of how Paul preached in a synagogue. In Acts 17 he gave a rather full record of how Paul preached to pagans. Luke was not present when either of these speeches had been given. Paul would have described the speeches to Luke. Why would Luke have considered it necessary to quote the speech so fully if the small effect of his speech was due to the speech itself? It seems rather, that Luke gave examples of how Paul approached each audience.

The speech was not entirely without effect. A body of believers did develop out of this experience. One significant convert was Dionysius, who was member of the Areopagus court itself. Dionysius became an elder in the church of Athens and the most noted leader of the church in that region.²²⁴ Damaris, a woman who believed, probably was named by Luke because she became well known in the assembly through some particular service – else why mention her, instead of leaving her unnamed as he does with the others who *joined him and believed*. Suffice it to say, God opened a few hearts in the Areopagus, but not many.

While Paul was in Athens, he was joined by Timothy. Luke does not record this, but Paul makes a statement in I Thessalonians that leads us to this conclusion.

*Therefore when we could endure it no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone, and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith,*²²⁵

Evidently, Silas remained in Berea, but Timothy had hurried to Athens in response to Paul's request. After Timothy's arrival, Paul, feeling anxious about the condition of the church in Thessalonica, had sent Timothy to spend time with that new born congregation. Paul's concern may have arisen over the fact that he knew that the Thessalonian brethren were being persecuted, even as he had been persecuted when in that city.²²⁶

Corinth: Acts 18:1-18

Paul left the intellectual and literary capital of Greece (Achaia) and traveled west to the political and commercial capitol. Increasingly, Paul selected the large cities as his target, making them centers from which the Gospel was promulgated in each region. Corinth had been destroyed in 146 BC by the Roman Consul Mummius and had lain in ruins for about 100 years. Roman leaders such as Gaius Marius wanted to repopulate the area with retired Roman soldiers who

²²³ Olaf Moe, page 295, quoting J. Warneck

²²⁴ So described in the Christian literature of the Second Century.

²²⁵ I Thessalonians 3:1-2

²²⁶ I Thessalonians 1:6; 2:14

were of a plebian class, without any pension. In 46 BC, Caesar accomplished that goal. He rebuilt the city on the old location, populating it with retired veterans and liberated slaves. The native Greeks were an insignificant minority. The new Corinth, ideally situated, quickly grew and prospered into a city of significant wealth. It's population when Paul arrived was at least 300,000, and by some estimates, a half million. Because of its excellent location on the isthmus between two seas (the Aegean on the east and the Adriatic/Ionian on the west), and with its two harbor cities, Cenchrea on the east and Lechaemum on the west, Corinth had all of the facilities that enabled it to become a commercial city of the highest rank. As one geographer stated, it became an important emporium for the exchange of goods between the east and west.²²⁷

Ship portage was a commerce somewhat unique to Corinth. Sailing around the southern point of the Peloponnesus always had been dangerous and many ships sank while navigating the point. For smaller ships, it was safer to take them out of the water and move them by land across the Corinthian Isthmus, from one sea to the other. At various times, a canal had been planned to allow ships to sail from one sea to the other, but the plans never came to fruition. Paul's journey from Athens to Corinth would have taken him directly across the path of the portage.

The soil of the region was not very good and so agriculture did not have much presence in the area. Corinth imported much of its food. The manual trades, however, prospered in Corinth. Paul's tent-making skills found a ready market in Corinth.

Because of the nature of the mixed population, and because Corinth was the site of much coming and going by seamen and their passengers, it became known for its frivolous and unrestrained behaviour. "To live Corinthian," had become a term to describe a dissolute person. Ancient writers describe how many seamen and visitors had become victims of the terrible temptations that they encountered in this city of two harbors. One ancient writer said that he never would advise anyone to visit Corinth. Prominent in Corinth was the little temple of Aphrodite (Venus) which was perched on a steep rock south of the city. This temple had over 1000 prostitutes who served the cause of immorality as much as they served the goddess. Accompanying the worship of Aphrodite was the worship of Bacchus (Dionysius). The Corinthians were well known for their immoderate drinking.

Because of the varied population, many religions had status in the city. Prominent among them were the Egyptian Isis & Serapis and the Phrygian worship of the Great Mother. The Jews had a significant synagogue in the city. Even though Corinth was a city of merchants, seamen, tradesmen, and great numbers of slaves, the city fathers did not want to lag behind Athens in any respect, and so they made certain that the city had its share of philosophers and rhetoricians. Considering the nature of the city, it is no surprise that Paul entered this arena with *fear and trembling*.²²⁸

At a more favorable time of the year, Paul might have traveled to Corinth by sea, but the lateness of the sailing season made sailing unsafe. His path took him through Eleusis, famous for its "mysteries," then to Megara, the ancient capital, about 25 miles from Athens. After walking another 20-25 miles he would have arrived in Corinth.

²²⁷ Olaf Moe, page 298

²²⁸ I Corinthians 2:3

Paul could not shake his anxiety for the churches in Macedonia, especially Thessalonica.²²⁹ He had hoped to get back to them, but unnamed hindrances kept him from fulfilling his wish. This reminds us of his statement to the Corinthians, concerning the stresses of his life,

*Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches.*²³⁰

Like a father concerned for his children, Paul bore the burden of prayerful concern for all of the churches that had been established through his ministry. Why Thessalonica was more of a concern than the others, at this time, we cannot be certain. The intimation of persecution mentioned in his letters to this church may have been more severe than in other places, thus his overriding concern.

Paul arrived in Corinth, all alone. However, he quickly made the acquaintance of two devout Jews from Pontus, Aquila and Priscilla. Either they were believers when Paul met them, or they were converted immediately after meeting Paul.

Aquila and Priscilla had been living in Rome, but Claudius had expelled all of the Jews from that city. Seutonius, writing about the event, states that the expulsion was caused by a series of disturbances caused by the action of Chrestus, the leader of the Christians. Many who did not understand Christianity, thought that the leader of the sect was still living – somewhere. The edict would have been issued in 50 AD, thus Aquila and Priscilla would have come to Corinth six or seven months before Paul arrived.²³¹ Paul not only lived with this couple, but they engaged in the same industry – both Paul and they were tentmakers.

Paul did not change his pattern. During the week, he made tents. On the Sabbath, he attended he synagogue and sought to persuade Jews and Greeks that Jesus was the hoped for Messiah. When his two companions, Silas and Timothy arrived, he seems to have given up tent making and gave his time and energy fully to the preaching of the Gospel. Various versions disagree on how to render Acts 18:5, which describes Paul's relationship to his work of preaching, upon the arrival of his team.

^{KJV} **Acts 18:5** *And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, **Paul was pressed in the spirit**, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ.*

^{NASB} **Acts 18:5** *But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, **Paul began devoting himself completely to the word**, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.*

^{NIV} **Acts 18:5** *When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, **Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching**, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.*

^{ESV} **Acts 18:5** *When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, **Paul was occupied with the word**, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus.*

^{YLT} **Acts 18:5** *And when both Silas and Timotheus came down from Macedonia, **Paul was pressed in the Spirit**, testifying fully to the Jews Jesus the Christ;*

What is the explanation for the difference? The first difference is in the Greek text. The King James and Young's Literal Translation follow the Beza Majority Text, which contains the term

²²⁹ I Thessalonians 2:17-3:2

²³⁰ II Corinthians 11:28

²³¹ W.M. Ramsey, *St. Paul, the Traveler and Roman Citizen*, page 254

the spirit. The texts on which the other versions are based, read, *the word*. I tend to accept the decision of the textual committees that favor, *the word*.

The second problem is that none of these are translations; they are interpretations. Note the following differences in language:

Pressed KJV and YLT
Devoted NIV and NASB
Occupied ESV

Here is the Greek phrase:

...συνείχετο τῷ λόγῳ ὁ παῦλος διαμαρτυρόμενος...
 pressed? by the word Paul solemnly or thoroughly witnessing

The first term of the phrase, *suneicheto*, is a compound word, derived from *sun*, which means, “with” and the term, *echo*, which means, “have.” This compound word is used elsewhere in the New Testament to convey the following ideas:

- *holding something close*
- *control*
- *stopping something*
- *pressing hard*
- *crowding*
- *holding in custody*
- *to be tormented or suffer*
- *to be distressed*

We can see how each of these ideas could be conveyed by the use of the term, depending on the context. What does the term mean in Acts 18:5? Personally, I opt for the ESV, *occupied*. The ministry of the word virtually *owned* Paul – he was focused totally on this – he could not restrain himself.

As in other cities, the members of the synagogue began to resist and blaspheme. In a dramatic gesture, Paul shook his garments and declared,

*"Your blood be on your own heads! I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."*²³²

Next door to the synagogue was a large house owned by Titius Justus. Evidently, Titius had become a believer, since he welcomed Paul’s ministry into his house. Many Corinthians, including the ruler of the synagogue, Crispus and his household, became believers and were baptized.

Once again, Paul had a night vision, in which the Lord appeared,

*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."*²³³

²³² Acts 18:6

Two important elements are displayed in this vision:

- First, Paul had been driven out of many cities. In this case, he was told to be aggressive and not flee. The Lord would not let harm come to him.
- Second is the statement, *I have many people in this city*. In his first letter to the Corinthian Church, Paul wrote, *I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth.*²³⁴ Paul remained in Corinth for eighteen months, having great evangelistic success. He recognized that his responsibility was to obediently do the task that is set before him. He acknowledged that if his labor produced any genuine results, it was because of the Lord – He is the causative agent – not the skill or technique of the evangelist.

As in almost every other city, opposition to Paul and the Gospel became violent, but Paul was not intimidated. A group of Jews grabbed Paul and hauled him before Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia, who had his governmental seat in Corinth. When the Jews tried to bring charges against Paul, Gallio displayed his impatience with them, probably expressing the same disdain that Caludius had felt when he expelled the Jews from Rome a little over a year before. He said that if Paul had been guilty of a crime, that would be something that he would consider, but not some religious issue of the Jews. Gallio drove them out of the courtroom. The crowd displayed violent anti-Semitic conduct in that they grabbed the leader of the synagogue and began to beat him. Gallio ignored the whole thing. So, Jesus promise of protection to Paul, while he was in Corinth, was fulfilled.

Paul continued in the city quite some time after this incident. As a result of his work in Corinth, the word of God was spread throughout Achaia.²³⁵ A church also was founded at Cenchrea. While in Corinth, Paul wrote the first letter to the Thessalonians, which was the first book of the New Testament to be written. He wrote II Thessalonians about one month after the first. Both expressed his concern for the church. Two major points stand out in these epistles:

- To stand firm in the face of all that they faced
- To live lives that glorified Christ.

Related to the second of these was the attitude that some in the church had toward the return of Christ. Their view was that since Christ was coming soon, why have a job and work for a living? Why not spend one's time in prayer or sitting in meetings, or perhaps just doing nothing. Paul addressed this attitude in the strongest terms, calling these brothers, *unruly*.²³⁶

Thanks to Gallio, Paul was able to stay in Corinth until he felt that it was time to leave. There is an interesting lesson in this. Even though he stayed in Corinth for at least eighteen months and probably for more than two years,²³⁷ the church was not as mature and stable as some of those which he had to leave quickly. The fact that the Corinthian Church manifested more problems and aberrations than any other of the churches that Paul planted (according to the written record

²³³ Acts 18:9-10

²³⁴ I Corinthians 3:6

²³⁵ I Thessalonians 1:7ff

²³⁶ I Thessalonians 5:4; II Thessalonians 3:6-12

²³⁷ Acts 18:11, 18

in the epistles), is an indication of the culture in which the church was planted. Paul's letter to Titus, in which he recognized the tendencies of Cretans, acknowledges the reality of culture's role in the character of a church.

*One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." This testimony is true. For this reason reprove them severely so that they may be sound in the faith,*²³⁸

At some point, not recorded, Paul had taken a vow. We know neither the nature of the vow nor when it had been made. The vow had expired, because one signaled the end of the season of the vow by shaving his head.²³⁹

*In Cenchrea he had his hair cut, for he was keeping a vow.*²⁴⁰

Ephesus: Acts 18:18-21

Aquila and Priscilla were destined for Ephesus and so Paul accompanied them to that city. He entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews, for a brief time. They urged him to continue for a few weeks, but he told them that he had to be on his way. He promised to return, if God willed. In all probability, he was testing the waters for future ministry. Aquila and Priscilla remained in Ephesus and became a witness in that city. The small body of believers that Paul found when he returned probably resulted from this couple's presence in the city.

Why was Paul in such a hurry to leave Ephesus? The strong invitation to preach to the Jewish citizens of Ephesus would have been very difficult to refuse. Ramsey and others argue that Paul's haste was caused by his determination to arrive in Jerusalem in time for the Passover. It was springtime, 53 AD. Passover in 53 AD fell on March 22. The normal season of navigation would have begun March 5. In order to reach Jerusalem by March 22, he would have set sail in an early ship. If Ramsey is correct in this view, there would have been many Jews sailing from Corinth and Ephesus to Palestine. In order to arrive in time, the ship may have left a week or so before the usual sailing season had begun. If this assumption is true, and the evidence does point to that conclusion, Paul would have been in the company of a shipload of pilgrims aiming for the same destination.

Paul sailed from Ephesus²⁴¹ and landed at Caesarea, the major port in Palestine. When the winds are from the northeast, it is easier to land at Caesarea than at Antioch's port city, Seleucia. However, if his goal were Jerusalem, Caesarea would have been the destination, regardless of the winds.

²³⁸ Titus 1:12-13

²³⁹ Numbers 6:2, 5, 9, 13-18. Shepard argues that Paul shaved his head at the beginning of the vow. This does not fit the pattern given for such vows (see cited scriptures in Numbers). The only case in which one shaved before, then a few days later shaved again, was related to the verification of the cleansing of a leper (Leviticus 14:1-9).

²⁴⁰ Acts 18:18

²⁴¹ Ephesus was located three miles inland, on the Cayster River. In New Testament times, the Cayster was navigable upstream to Ephesus.

*When he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, and went down to Antioch.*²⁴²

No church is named in the passage. On the surface, it appears that the term, *church*, refers to the Church at Caesarea. The Caesarean Church was birthed when Jerusalem Christians were scattered as a result of Saul's persecution. Philip concluded his coastal evangelistic trip at Caesarea, but other refugees may have preceded him to that city.²⁴³ Initially, the Church in Caesarea would have consisted of Jews and proselytes. Later, after Peter's visit to the home of Cornelius, Gentiles would have been a part of the brotherhood.²⁴⁴,

Many scholars argue that *the church*, referenced in Acts 18:22, is the mother church at Jerusalem.²⁴⁵ The statement that Paul *went down to Antioch* after visiting *the church* lends great weight to this view. In contemporary terminology, when describing movement from one location to another, *up* or *down*, refers to the north/south direction of travel (since it is our custom to orient our maps with north at the top of the map). When traveling either east or west, we say, *over to*. This was not the manner in which these terms were used in biblical times. When describing a journey, Scripture consistently uses *up* and *down* with reference to topography. Thus, the description of a journey to Jerusalem usually states that some one *went up* to Jerusalem, because of its elevation above sea level, compared to the surrounding terrain.

Caesarea was at sea level. Antioch (modern Antakya), a few miles inland, is of higher elevation than Caesarea. Jerusalem is 2600 feet above sea level. Therefore, considering the topography of the three cities, only Jerusalem fits the description as a place from which Paul could have gone *down* to Antioch. This view also agrees with Ramsey's assertion that Paul's immediate goal was the Passover in Jerusalem, March 22, 53 AD.

In all probability, therefore, Paul paused to visit the church at Caesarea, then paid a visit to the Church in Jerusalem, where he celebrated the Passover, then *went down* to Antioch. He reported to the Antioch Church on all that had happened since he and Silas had left Antioch, three years before.

The Third Missionary Journey

Acts 18:23-21:17

After spending several months in Antioch, Paul again left for the field. Luke summarizes in a few words what obviously was a major season of ministry.

²⁴² Acts 18:22

²⁴³ Acts 8:40

²⁴⁴ Acts 10

²⁴⁵ Ramsey, *St. Paul, Traveler and Roman Citizen*, page 264; Shepard, page 191

*And having spent some time there, he left and passed successively through the Galatian region and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples... Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus, and found some disciples.*²⁴⁶

These brief words cover a journey of about 1500 miles. Paul seems to have traveled alone. Initially, he followed the same route that he and Silas had followed on the previous trip. He visited churches in Syria and Cilicia, passed through the Cilician Gates, visited the brethren in Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Pisidian Antioch. After visiting these churches, there was nothing to hinder his direct path to Ephesus.

The comment, *the upper country*, catches our attention. The normal route to Ephesus was a southern trade route, through the Lycus and Maeander valleys. The trade route passed through more populated coastal cities. Paul seemed to have been in a hurry to get back to Ephesus. Therefore, he took the less inhabited but more direct route to Ephesus. Before winter set in, Paul was back in Ephesus, from which he launched his mission in Asia.

Ephesus: Acts 19:1 – 20:1

In order to understand some of the details of the narrative concerning Paul's ministry – and turmoil – in Ephesus, we need to know something about the city.²⁴⁷ The valley of the Caster penetrated far inland, so that it created a natural caravan route to the East. Roads from Ephesus connected with all of the major thoroughfares, north, south, east and west. It was a perfect base for evangelizing the Asian hinterland.

The outstanding feature of Ephesus was the Temple of Artemis. Initially, the temple was dedicated to a local deity, but in time it came to be identified with Artemis (called Diana by the Romans). Her image was a many-breasted figure with a female face; instead of legs her torso rested on a block of stone. The first temple was begun in the 6th Century, BC, but was not completed until 400 BC. It was burned in 356 BC and then rebuilt with greater magnificence. The new temple was 425 feet x 220 feet. The temple construction and on-going operation was subsidized by contributions from cities all over Asia. It was considered one of the wonders of the ancient world and was a popular pilgrim destination. Because the temple grounds were considered sacred and inviolable, those who wanted a safe place for their funds deposited them in the Temple depository – which functioned as a crude bank. Oppressed people also fled there, because they knew that they could not be attacked on the sacred grounds. To some degree, the temple grounds were like the cities of refuge in Israel.²⁴⁸

The citizens of Asia, and Ephesus in particular, did not practice their religion as a meaningless routine, as did many who lived in cities with a state religion. The followers of Artemis demonstrated a fanatical devotion to her. Ephesian coins contained a crude picture of the temple and described Ephesus as the ΝΕΩΚΟΡΟΣ (*neokoros*), which means “temple-keeper,” or “temple-sweeper.” In other words, the one who takes care of the temple – the maintenance man. This is the exact language used by the town clerk in Acts 19:35.

Ephesus was a free city and maintained its own government – of course under the oversight of the Roman proconsul of Asia. The ultimate authority in the city was a legally-convened

²⁴⁶ Acts 18:23; 19:1

²⁴⁷ See Merrill C. Tenney, *New Testament Survey* (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company – Intersarsity Press) 1985, Pages 293-294

²⁴⁸ Numbers 35

assembly of the people – every citizen had a vote. A popularly chosen city council/senate acted as the central legislative body. A town clerk was the facilitator – the responsible official who was entrusted with the keeping of records and presenting business to the assembly. Labor guilds also were very influential in Ephesus – prefiguring the place of guilds in the Middle-Ages. All of these matters come into play in the narrative of Paul’s experience in Ephesus.

Paul encountered several important problems in Ephesus. The first was the survival of the teaching of John the Baptist, whose disciples continued to be active after John’s death. An eloquent, educated,²⁴⁹ Alexandrian Jew named, Apollos, was one of these. Luke, records that Apollos, *had been instructed in the way of the Lord*. The term rendered, “instructed” is, *Κατηχέω* (*katekeo*) which conveys the idea of being instructed orally. It is the term from which we obtain the English word, *catechize*. Apollos’ understanding of Jesus was the same as that which John’s disciples would have had when John testified concerning the Lord – *behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*.²⁵⁰

Apollos knew the Scriptures thoroughly and from them had been demonstrating that Jesus was/is the Messiah. However, he knew only the baptism of John.²⁵¹ John’s baptism was one of repentance, symbolizing a complete cleansing, looking forward to and in preparation for the coming Messiah. Baptism in the name of Jesus (upon the authority of Jesus) acknowledges the fulfillment of all that John’s baptism anticipated.

Apollos’ doctrine was not false, it was just incomplete. Luke’s language is revealing.

- Apollos had been *instructed in the way of the Lord... was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus*
- Priscilla and Aquilla *expounded*²⁵² *the way of the Lord to him more accurately*

The term rendered, *accurately* in the first instance is *ἀκριβῶς* (*akribos*). The term rendered, *more accurately*, in the second instance is *ἀκριβῆς* (*akribes*) meaning *strict*.

After coming to a complete knowledge of Jesus and “the Way,” he was motivated to travel to Corinth and engage in ministry in that city. The little church in Ephesus wrote him a letter of introduction and he was well received at Corinth. This is one of those matters that demonstrate the relationships that existed between the churches in the early days of Christianity. They knew one another – trusted one another – encouraged one another – supported one another. Apollos was very effective in Corinth, persuading the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. Because he was such a great orator, he became the “favorite preacher” of some members of the church. Apollos did nothing to encourage this attitude, but rather sought to discourage the, “I’m of Paul, I’m of Apollos,” rivalry. After leaving the city, he resisted returning, even when Paul invited him to do so.²⁵³ He and Paul became trusted friends.

After Apollos left for Corinth, Paul arrived in Ephesus. No doubt he stayed with his friends, Aquilla and Priscilla. They probably told him about the believers who still were at the same place that Apollos had been, theologically – only partially informed. Shortly after his arrival in

²⁴⁹ The descriptive term, *λόγιος*, can be understood as either, *eloquent*, or *learned*, but usually implies both.

²⁵⁰ John 1:29, 36

²⁵¹ Acts 18:24-25

²⁵² *Ἐκτίθημι* (*ektithemi*) meaning, “to expose,”

²⁵³ Acts 16:12

the city he met a dozen men of this stripe. In all probability, these had been instructed by Apollos, prior to his coming to the full knowledge of the Gospel message.

When Paul met these men, he sensed a spiritual deficiency. He asked them if they received the Holy Spirit when they came to faith. Paul's assumption, as attested in his epistles, was that each convert received the Holy Spirit as a part of his salvation experience. Their reply was that they had not even heard of the Holy Spirit. Paul asked them about their baptism – *Into what, then, were you baptized?* The assumption was that one routinely received the Holy Spirit when he was immersed. They replied that they had been baptized into John's baptism. Paul instructed them concerning the incompleteness of John's baptism and he then baptized them *into the Name of the Lord Jesus*. The term, *into* (εἰς - *eis*) is significant. This is the term consistently used both for saving faith and saving immersion in water. The term connotes motion, moving from outside of something into something.²⁵⁴ This is contrasted with James' description of mere belief, equivalent to the belief of demons.

*You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.*²⁵⁵

After this, Paul laid hands on them and the Holy Spirit came on them and they began speaking with various languages and prophesying.

Shortly thereafter, Paul entered the synagogue (probably the same one that had been the arena for Apollos' preaching) where for three months he boldly proclaimed the Gospel. As usual, some of the Jews began trying to prejudice the crowds by making slanderous statements about "the Way." The Greek indicates that these who opposed Paul, hardened their own hearts and chose disobedience. This catches our attention because in situations already noted, God's initiative is what opened hearts that already were closed. Here, the picture is painted of individuals who, at their own initiative, closed their hearts.

Paul's response was to leave the synagogue, taking with him those who had become believers, and relocate to the lecture hall of Tyrannus. For the next two years, the Gospel went forth from this lecture hall to all of Asia. Luke makes an extraordinary statement,

*This took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.*²⁵⁶

²⁵⁴ Here are passages that speak of believing *into* Christ: Matthew 9:28; 18:6; Mark 9:42; 11:23; John 1:7, 12; 3:16, 18, 36; 5:24; 6:29, 35, 40; 7:38f; 9:35f; 11:25f, 48; 12:36, 44, 46; 14:1, 12; 16:9; 17:20; 20:25; Acts 4:32; 9:26; 10:43; 14:1; 19:4; Romans 1:16; 3:22; 4:5, 11; 10:4, 10, 14; 15:13; I Corinthians 14:22; Ephesians 1:19; Philippians 1:29; 2 Thessalonians 2:11; 1 Timothy 1:16; Hebrews 4:3; 1 Pet 1:8; 2:7; 1 John 4:1; 5:10, 13

Some passages speak of being baptized upon the authority of Christ (in the name of Christ) – the Greek preposition is either ἐπί or ἐν. Examples are Acts 2:38; 10:48

Some passages speak of being baptized *into* Christ, or *into* the name of Christ, signifying moving from outside to inside of a relationship: Matthew 28:19; Acts 8:16; 19:5; Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27. This concept is implied in Paul's argument that no one was baptized into Paul's name, I Corinthians 1:13, 15.

²⁵⁵ James 2:19

²⁵⁶ Acts 19:10

Many who heard the word in the lecture hall traveled the highways and byways of Asia, spreading the Gospel. Timothy and Erastus possibly were two who engaged in this activity. It was during this time that the Gospel was taken to Colossae and Laodicea, but Paul himself never visited that remote region of Asia.²⁵⁷

Luke makes another striking statement, concerning Paul's ministry,

*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.*²⁵⁸

Any miracle is extraordinary, but this was a time of very special miraculous activity. Aprons and handkerchiefs that Paul touched were carried to the sick and upon touching these fabrics, the sick were healed and evil spirits departed. Only here does the New Testament record anything of this nature. The only other season of such significant activity, without the unusual methods, was the period that followed the death of Ananias and Sapphira.²⁵⁹ The fact that these were extraordinary miracles dictates against our making this practice a routine, as some have done in recent years.

The episode concerning the seven sons of Sceva, is very informative.²⁶⁰ Jewish exorcists observing that miraculous events took place when the name of Jesus was invoked, deduced that the power was in pronouncing the name, *Jesus*. This, of course, is the very nature of magic and sorcery – certain objects, mantras, or terms are believed to have supernatural power and one can use these to work magic. The exorcists were sadly mistaken. When they tried this ploy, the evil spirit responded, *I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?* The man who was possessed by the evil spirit attacked the seven exorcists, wounded them, and tore off their clothes. They fled the house naked and wounded.

The result of this event was fear and the magnification of the name of Jesus (the same thing happened following the death of Ananias and Sapphira). It is interesting that the name, *Jesus*, was not powerful enough to deter the spirit that the exorcists had challenged: yet, because of this episode, the name of Jesus was magnified!

We cannot avoid the truth displayed in this episode, i.e., that there is a clear difference between,

**Merely uttering the verbal sounds Vs. Reverence for the Person of Christ,
signified in the Name**

This difference vitiates against the teaching of some extreme Word of Faith advocates who declare that the power is in the spoken words.

²⁵⁷ Colossians 2:1 – Paul had a concern for all who had not seen his face, implying that the Colossians were some of those.

²⁵⁸ Acts 19:11-12

²⁵⁹ Acts 5:12-16

²⁶⁰ Acts 19:13-17

A striking evidence of the genuineness of the conversion of great numbers of people was the burning of expensive books of magic.²⁶¹ Not only were many Ephesians turning away from the occult, they were destroying all that tied them to it. This calls to mind the exhortation of John the Baptist,

*Therefore bear fruits in keeping with repentance*²⁶²

When the time came to leave Ephesus, Paul planned to visit to Macedonia and Greece, then journey to Jerusalem, and thence to Rome. Little did he know that his plan would work out, but not in the manner that he thought. He sent Timothy and Erastus on to Macedonia, no doubt planning to join them shortly.

After the departure of Timothy and Erastus, Paul faced serious trouble. Because so many in Ephesus and Asia had come to Christ, the market for religious objects related to the Temple of Artemis had fallen off considerably. Again, as with the slave girl in Philippi, Paul's work had touched somebody's money and the inevitable result was extreme opposition. The silversmiths, who were suffering the most, led by a man named, Demetrius, under the pretense of religious devotion, stirred up the religious fervor of the non-converted population. The result was a great uproar that caused the population of the city to become a confused mob. As was their custom when something important was happening, the townsfolk rushed into the amphitheatre, where the town assembly normally took place.

Paul's enemies dragged into the arena two of Paul's traveling companions, Gaius and Aristarchus. Paul tried to enter the arena, but the Christians forcibly restrained him. Some of the *Asiarchs*²⁶³ who had become Paul's friends (probably Christians) realized that they could not control the crowd if Paul entered the arena; they succeeded in persuading him to stay out of sight. The scene in the arena was so confused that most of the people had no idea why they were there; they just showed up because something important was happening. No doubt many in the crowd were Christians.

A curious development took place. The Jews, realizing that this was a great opportunity to get rid of Paul, put forth a Jewish speaker named Alexander. They wanted to make certain that the Ephesians knew that even though Paul were a Jew, they had no connection with him. As soon as their spokesman, Alexander took the floor, the Ephesian worshippers of Artemis recognized him as a Jew. Knowing that the Jews were strong opponents of idols, the mob went wild. For two hours they kept shouting, *Great is Artemis of the Ephesians.*²⁶⁴

After two hours of unrestrained uproar, the crowd began to grow weary and the town clerk finally was able to speak to the assembly. As noted earlier, he was the executive officer of the civic assembly. He was responsible for presenting matters and decrees that were to be voted on and then recording the result of the vote (he kept the minutes of all meetings). He also was the liaison between the Ephesian local government and the Roman provincial government that was

²⁶¹ Acts 19:18-19

²⁶² Luke 3:8

²⁶³ The title, *Asiarch*, was restricted to those who were currently holding office in the Asian league. It was from their ranks that the annually elected high priest imperial cult (Roman) was chosen.

²⁶⁴ Acts 19:23-34

based in the city. The Roman officials would hold him responsible for the uproar and might impose serious penalties on the city. It was in everyone's interest, especially that of the town clerk, to calm the riot.

The town clerk presented the following argument:

- Everyone knows that Ephesus is the guardian of the Temple of Artemis²⁶⁵
- Everyone knows that Ephesus is the guardian of the image of Artemis, which fell down from heaven (it is not an image that a man created)
- By implication, the divine origin and power of these sacred objects cannot be denied or assailed.
- Since this is true, you should not resort to behaviour that will get all of us into trouble with the Romans
- The two men that they had dragged into the arena had not robbed the temple nor blasphemed Artemis.
- If Demetrius and the other silversmiths had any valid charges to bring, let them do so in an orderly manner, before the court.
- If anything more is desired, we can call a lawful assembly to deal with the issues
- What has happened today has put us at risk of being censured, possibly fined, by the proconsul.

Of special note is the term rendered, *assembly* (lawful assembly in verse 39, unlawful assembly in verse 40, and just, "the assembly," in verse 41). The term is ἐκκλησία (*ekklesia*). This is a compound word, created from ἐκ (*ek*) – "out" and καλέω (*kaleo*) "to call." The resulting compound noun, ἐκκλησία, means, therefore, *the called out ones*. In cities, such as Ephesus, when there were civic matters to be decided, the citizens of that city were called out of the general populace of slaves, tourists, traveling merchants, etc. The citizens were called out of society to come to a town meeting. Both those called to the meeting and the meeting itself were called, ἐκκλησία. It is significant that this is the term that the Holy Spirit chose to describe those who have been called out of the world into God's Kingdom on earth. We render this term with the Old English term, *Church*. Thus, it is proper to call believers *the Church*. It also is proper to call the Sunday gathering, *Church*. On Sunday, the Church goes to church.

After the clerk had dismissed the assembly and all went home, Paul called for a church meeting in which he exhorted the disciples, then left for Macedonia.

The Corinthian Letters

While Paul was at Ephesus, he kept in touch with the churches of Macedonia and Achaia through various disciples that traveled back and forth. The church at Corinth was a special vexation because of its instability. The church was composed, for the most part, of Gentiles who had no background in the Old Testament. Their moral and spiritual background were the exact opposite of Christian principle. It took a lot of repetitious and elementary teaching to bring them forward into spiritual maturity (I Corinthians 3:1-3).

²⁶⁵ As noted earlier, ΝΕΩΚΟΡΟΣ (*neokoros*), which means "temple-keeper,

Two visitors to Corinth helped in many ways. One visitor was the learned and polished speaker, Apollos. He especially was effective in dealing with Jews because of his extensive and deep knowledge of the Old Testament, as well as his debating skills.

The other visitor was Peter. Although there is no record of his visit, the fact that some of the Corinthians claimed that they were of Paul, some claimed that they were of Apollos, and some claimed that they were of Peter does not make much sense unless the church had been visited by Peter.

While these two apostolic men were in Corinth, the Church had very experienced and qualified oversight and input. Even so, serious problems prevailed in the church. Because of the reports that he received from Corinth, Paul wrote them a letter, to which he made allusion in I Corinthians 5:9, *I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people*. The moral atmosphere of Corinth (which we discussed above) was so perverse that absolute separation from evil was necessary if the church were to survive. Evidently, there had been some misunderstanding of this injunction, because Paul had to explain in I Corinthians that he was not advocating withdrawal from the world, but from any professing Christian who persisted in sinful living. The full contents of this first letter never will be known, since it was lost. All that we know about this letter is found in references to it in Paul's later correspondence. Thus, the letter that we call First Corinthians, in reality is Second Corinthians.

The response to the first letter was quite unsatisfactory. Apollos and Peter had moved on and the church, bereft of solid leadership, fell into confusion. Some slaves of a Corinthian family in Ephesus on a business trip reported the situation to Paul. Finally, three members of the church, Stephanus, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, traveled to Ephesus to bring a contribution and a letter containing certain questions that the Corinthians wanted clarified. In response, Paul wrote First Corinthians. Because of statements made in the letter, it probably was written near the close of Paul's Ephesian ministry.²⁶⁶

This First Epistle to the Corinthians is the most varied, both in style and content, of any of Paul's epistles. Merrill Tenney describes the letter,

“The topics range from schism to finance and from church decorum to the resurrection. Every literary device known to writing is employed in its pages: logic, sarcasm, entreaty, scolding, poetry, narration, exposition – in short, it is written in the same style as Paul would have carried on in a conversation with the elders of Corinth had he been present with them.”²⁶⁷

Yet, in spite of its varied style and content, there is a central theme. Findlay calls it, “the doctrine of the cross in its social application.”²⁶⁸ The letter addresses the conflict that takes place when Christian ideals and practices bump heads with pagan civilization.

²⁶⁶ When he wrote it, he already had planned an extended visit to Macedonia and Achaia (I Corinthians 16:5-7). It would have been written in the winter, because he spoke of remaining in Ephesus until Pentecost (I Corinthians 16:8).

²⁶⁷ Merrill C. Tenney, page 297

²⁶⁸ G.G. Findlay, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians in The Expositor's Bible* (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1947, Vol. II, 739

In this letter, Paul treated the topics in the order that they were presented to him. He addresses in the first six chapters, the schism that the slaves of Chloe reported to him, In Chapter 7:1, he begins to address the topics that were in the letter that the three emissaries brought him. He begins each topic, with *the things whereof you wrote* (7:1; 7:25; 8:1 [11:2]; 12:1; [15:1]’ 16’1).

The letter was dispatched to Corinth by Timothy (I Corinthians 16:10). Paul sought to convince Apollos to undertake the task of straightening out the problems, but probably for the reasons mentioned above (the schismatic tendency among his followers), he declined (I Corinthians 16:12). Paul was a bit concerned that the task would intimidate Timothy and so he urged the Corinthians to not frighten or despise Timothy (I Corinthians 16:10-11).

All evidence points to Timothy’s inability to do much good in Corinth, and so Paul paid the church a visit. Luke does not record this visit, but Paul refers to it in II Corinthians.

*Here for this third time I am ready to come to you,*²⁶⁹

When did trip number two occur? His first visit was when the church was founded. The trip that was planned, after II Corinthians was delivered, was to be the third trip. Paul must have made a trip to Corinth between the time that Timothy left Corinth (after he delivered I Corinthians) and Paul’s departure from Ephesus. It was but a short jaunt from Ephesus to Corinth, and it seems that Paul did travel to Corinth in this period to try to deal with the issues that Timothy could not handle.

Statements in II Corinthians make sense only if Paul did make such a trip and that while there he was grossly insulted and his counsel ignored. Some self-styled apostles had invaded the church. They bragged on their Jewish credentials and their activity as ministers of Christ. They drew their support from the churches and belittled Paul – arguing that he was not an apostle because he worked with his hands (see II Corinthians 10-11). The offending members of the church had been without any sign of repentance. The relationship between Paul and Corinth was tense.

Macedonia and Achaia: Acts 20:1-6

Paul sent his chief trouble-shooter, Titus, to Corinth to deal with the church. Because Paul gave Titus the toughest assignments, we assume that he was more mature and carried more authority in his person than did Timothy. Paul determined to not visit Corinth until the church had a different attitude (II Corinthians 1:15-16, 23; 2:1ff).

In II Corinthians 2:4, Paul refers to a previous letter that he wrote *with many tears*, which was intended to convince the Corinthians of his love for them. I Corinthians does not fit this description. So, it appears that Paul sent another letter, between I Corinthians and II Corinthians, which also has been lost. That means that in reality, II Corinthians is IV Corinthians:

1. The letter written before I Corinthians,
2. I Corinthians,
3. The letter written before II Corinthians,
4. II Corinthians.

²⁶⁹ II Corinthians 12:14

II Corinthians differs from I Corinthians in that II Corinthians deals with a lot of personal matters. The human Paul is much in evidence. It largely deals with Paul's defense of his ministry and an explanation of his personal conduct.

After Paul left Ephesus, he traveled north to the port of Troas, hoping to find Titus waiting for him. Paul was eager to learn from Titus how things had gone during his visit to Corinth. Titus wasn't there, so Paul traveled on to Macedonia, where his troubles multiplied (II Corinthians 2:12-13; 7:5). While he was ministering among the churches in Macedonia and collecting the offering for Jerusalem, Titus arrived with news that a revival had broken out in Corinth. He reported that the church's attitude had changed from obstinacy to repentance (II Corinthians 7:6-16). With joy, Paul composed II Corinthians. Among other things in the letter was a plea to the Corinthians to match the contributions that Macedonia had given for the Jerusalem Aid Fund.

Paul left Macedonia, then traveled south to Achaia, where he spent three months in and around Corinth. Luke does not give us any details of that ministry, nor do any of the epistles shed light on events of that period, except that he was engaged in collecting funds for Jerusalem and that he wrote the Roman and Galatian Epistles at the conclusion of the period.

As spring drew near, Paul planned to return to Jerusalem with the offering that he had collected among the Gentile churches. The various churches that had contributed to the offering sent along emissaries to monitor the funds and to greet the Jerusalem Church. Those so commissioned are listed by Luke.

*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.*²⁷⁰

Galatians and Romans were written at this time, either from Corinth or Philippi (see below). Statements made in Romans make clear that this was the time and place of its composition:

- Romans 15:19 states that Paul had concluded his preaching as far as Illyricum (the northeastern border of Macedonia). This description only could be fitted into the period in the third missionary journey, prior to his departure for Jerusalem.
- Romans 15:25-26 states that he had with him the offering that the churches of Macedonia and Achaia had taken for the poor in Jerusalem and that he was on the eve of sailing to Jerusalem to deliver it.
- Romans 16:1 commends Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea (the eastern seaport of Corinth) and a helper of Paul, who probably delivered the epistle.

Romans was written to prepare the church for his planned future visit, probably one year later. The letter to the Galatians grew out of doctrinal problems in the churches. Unlike the other church-epistles of Paul, this one was written to churches of a district, "the Galactic land." These churches would have included those which developed during the first missionary journey, and which Paul had revisited twice on the second and third missionary journeys.

²⁷⁰ Acts 20:4

The name, Galatia, is derived from the name of the Gauls. Originally the territory to which the term refers belonged to the Phrygians and those of Pamphylia. Certain tribes of Gauls (present-day French) left their native territory and sought to overrun Greece. They were repulsed at Delphi and so they moved eastward, across the Bosphorus and finally settled in the region that came to be known as Galatia (generally dated at 279 BC). In 189 BC they were conquered by the Romans and in 25 BC they became a part of the Roman province which was named for them. Though speaking Greek, they continued also to speak their native language, to the point that Jerome, in the 4th Century AD, was of the opinion that a Gaul and a Frenchman could converse with ease.

Julius Caesar wrote, concerning the Gauls, “The infirmity of the Gauls is that they are fickle in their resolves and fond of change, and not to be trusted.” Thierry describes them, “Frank, impetuous, impressible, eminently intelligent, but at the same time extremely changeable, inconstant, fond of show, perpetually quarreling, the fruit of excessive vanity.”²⁷¹

After Paul’s last visit, Judaizers entered the region and felt that they needed to destroy Paul’s influence and impose legalism upon the Gauls. The descriptions of Caesar and Thierry fit the scene that Paul addresses in his letter to them – changeable and impulsively moved from one opinion to another.

The similarities between II Corinthians, Romans, and Galatians lend credence to the view that all three were written within the same time period.

- Incidental similarities, such as the mention of Damascus and Titus:
II Corinthians 11:32 and Galatians 1:17
II Corinthians 2:13; 7:5-6, 13f; 8:16; 9:15 and Galatians 2:1-3
- Verbal similarities
II Corinthians 10:1-11 and Galatians 4:18, 20
II Corinthians 12:20-21 and Galatians 5:19-21
II Corinthians 9:6 and Galatians 6:7
II Corinthians 11:12 and Galatians 4:17
II Corinthians 11:20 and Galatians 2:4; 4:3
- Other relations between Romans and Galatians
Romans 8:14-17 and Galatians 4:6-7
Romans 10:5 and Galatians 3:12
Romans 4:13, 14, 16 and Galatians 3:14, 16, 29
Romans 11:32 and Galatians 3:22

Paul learned that his enemies plotted to kill him on board ship. Because of this, he sent his fellow-travelers by ship to Troas, while he and Luke traveled overland north to Philippi. Paul and Luke remained in Philippi until after the Feast of Unleavened Bread (which immediately followed Passover). Following the feast, they sailed from Neapolis to Troas where their companions were waiting for them. Because of the direction of the prevailing winds the trip took five days (as contrasted with two days, when they sailed in the opposite direction on the

²⁷¹ As quoted in McGarvey and Pendleton, *The Standard Bible Commentary*, Thessalonians, Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans (Cincinnati, The Standard Publishing Company) 1916, page 247.

second missionary journey). From this point on, through the years of imprisonment, Luke became Paul's closest associate.

Asia to Jerusalem: Acts 20:7-21:17

Paul and Luke arrived in Troas on a Monday. They remained in Troas for seven days, enabling them to be present for the Sunday gathering of the Church. A discussion of their experience in Troas is contained in the attached document, *The Meeting*.

Paul and his companions left Troas and headed south. For unexplained reasons, Paul wanted to walk by himself from Troas to Assos, a distance of about 20 miles. The rest of the company boarded a vessel and sailed to Assos. The sea voyage from Troas to Assos (around cape Lectum) was a greater distance than the land route. Paul boarded the ship at Assos and they sailed on to Miletus, which meant that the ship on which they traveled was an "express." The vessel sailed directly across the mouth of the Ephesian Gulf, rather than calling at Ephesus. The brothers planned to disembark at Miletus and find a ship that was heading straight for Palestine, rather than one that would make stops along the way at all of the trading points.

While waiting for a ship at Miletus, Paul yearned to meet with the Ephesian elders (these were men with whom he had spent three years). He did not dare to walk to Ephesus, a distance of about 30 miles. The ship, waiting for the best sailing conditions, might leave without him while he was away. The prudent thing to do was to send a message to the Ephesians to come to Miletus and meet with him. If the vessel left before they arrived, they would suffer the inconvenience of a 60 mile round-trip hike, but Paul still would not be stranded in Miletus, waiting for the next ship. Indeed the rendezvous took place as hoped.

The address to the Ephesian elders Acts 20:17-38

McGarvey aptly states, "The interview which Paul now holds with these elders may be regarded as a type of all those which he held with various bodies of disciples on this mournful journey."²⁷² His remarks fall into three divisions:

1. A brief review of his labors in their city (vs. 18-21)
2. Comments on his own future and the cause of the gloom which seemed to surround his spirit on this journey (vs. 22-27)
3. An exhortation and a warning to the elders, accompanied by a citing of his life as an example for them to imitate (vs. 28-35)

Comments on Paul's speech

Some topics in Paul's remarks call for comment.

I. First is the question of Paul's compulsion to get to Jerusalem in time for Pentecost.

"And now, behold, bound in spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there,"²⁷³

²⁷² McGarvey, page 185

²⁷³ Acts 20:22

Some have argued that Paul was not completely free from the Law and that because of this he felt compelled to get to Jerusalem to observe Pentecost. Those who hold this view point to the statement in Acts 19:21, arguing that Paul himself decided to go to Jerusalem. Not only was he not being led by the Spirit, but he even pressed on in spite of the warnings that the Spirit put in his path.

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."

In response to this charge, we would point out that both Romans and Galatians, the portions of the New Testament that speak loudest against the rule of the Mosaic Law in the life of a Christian, were written by Paul before he embarked on this journey. A second response is that throughout his journeys Paul was sensitive to the Spirit's guidance – this especially is apparent on the second journey when the Spirit twice forbade the team to take a particular direction.

Yet, getting to the heart of the matter, we address the two verses that are before us. The question that must be asked in both of these passages is, "which is correct, **Spirit** or **spirit**?" If the word is rendered with a small "s" then everything is of Paul's doing. If the word is rendered with a capital "S" then everything is of the Holy Spirit's doing. When the New Testament was written, the Greek language consisted of all capitals. There was no lower-case script. So capitalization of terms was impossible. Our answer must be sought through an inductive analysis of the use of these terms elsewhere.

The Greek terms in Acts 19:21 are ἐν τῷ πνεύματι (*en to pneumati*). The definite article precedes the noun, so it is *the S/spirit*, rather than *spirit*. This pattern occurs seven times in the New Testament.

In four of these instances, there is a defining term that identifies what **S/spirit** is referenced:

- In two of these instances (Mark 12:36; Luke 10:21), the Spirit is defined by the term, ἅγιος (*hagios*), meaning, "holy." So, in these two instances, clearly the term refers to the Holy Spirit.
- In one instance (I Corinthians 6:11) the term is modified by τοῦ θεοῦ (*tou theou*), meaning, "of God." So, in that instance, the correct rendering is *The Spirit of God*.
- In one instance (Romans 1:9) the term is modified by μου (*mou*), which means, "of me." So, the correct rendering is *my spirit*.

In Luke 4:1, there is no defining term adjacent to the *en to pneumati*, but earlier in the verse, Jesus is described as being "full of the Holy Spirit," and then at the end of the verse, the statement is made that He was led about *en to pneumati*- "in the Spirit." Since the earlier reference in the verse is to the Holy Spirit's filling Jesus, then one would conclude that the Holy Spirit did the leading.

In Luke 2:27, Simeon is described as coming to the Temple, *en to pneumati*. Because the earlier verses speak of the activity of the Holy Spirit in this event (verses 25-26), the expression, *en to pneumati*, surely refers to the Spirit – not Simeon's spirit.

Since the expression, *en to pneumati*, is used consistently to describe the state of *being in the Holy Spirit* (with but one exception, Romans 1:9, and there the exception is made clear by the

addition of the Greek term *mou-* “my”), the weight of evidence is on the side of Acts 19:21’s being correctly rendered, *Spirit* (i.e. the Holy Spirit), rather than *spirit* (i.e. the human spirit).

It is interesting to note how the various versions render Acts 19:21. Some render the term as, *spirit*, and some as, *Spirit*. The KJV reads *spirit*, but the NKJV reads *Spirit*. In the interlinear Greek New Testament that is tied to the KJV, the term is rendered with a capital “S.”

The NIV went far afield and totally departed from the Greek, by rendering the terms, *Paul decided*. This is very irresponsible – it is an interpretation, not a translation and flies in the face of the patterns which we have just discussed.

Paul’s Acts 20:22-23 description of his journey helps us to understand Acts 19:21. The expression, *bound in the S/spirit*, is *δεδεμένος ἐς τὸ πνεῦματι* (*dedemenos ego to pneumatī*). Most translations (although not all) render this expression as referring to the Holy Spirit. Both the interlinear text tied to the KJV and the interlinear text tied to the Nestle text render the expression *Spirit*, indicating that the scholars associated with both texts considered this to refer to the Holy Spirit. Here is why.

The term, *dedemenos* is the perfect, passive, participle of the verb, *δέω* (*deo*).

- The Greek perfect tense refers to a present condition that is the result of a past action.
- The passive voice means that the subject is acted upon by a entity other than himself. Paul is the subject and the other entity that acted upon him is the Spirit.
- If the voice were middle, rather than passive, the statement would refer to something that Paul had done to himself. However, it is not middle, but passive, which means another entity acted upon him.

Thus, according to the tense and the voice of the verb, the Spirit did something to Paul in the past, creating a condition that continued to the time that Paul made the Acts 20:22 statement.

What did the Spirit do to Paul in the past? The Spirit *bound* him and he still was bound (Greek perfect tense). As a result Paul was on his way to Jerusalem as the Spirit directed. One might say that he was tied to the Holy Spirit in this enterprise.

What are we to make of the prophecies given to Paul concerning the fate that awaited him in Jerusalem? Note that in none of these instances did the Holy Spirit Himself tell Paul to stop the journey. The Spirit, through prophecy, informed Paul of the fate that was ahead

Acts 20:23 *except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me.*

Acts 21:4 *After looking up the disciples, we stayed there seven days; and they kept telling Paul through the Spirit not to set foot in Jerusalem.*

Acts 21:10-12 *As we were staying there for some days, a 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.'" When we had heard this, we as well as the local residents began begging him not to go up to Jerusalem.*

In the last two instances, those who received the prophecies begged Paul to abort his trip to Jerusalem. The end of the account in Acts 20 (verse 38), informs us that the Ephesians experienced grief, but did not try to dissuade Paul from his forward journey.

What about Acts 21:4, which states that the brothers and sisters in Tyre *told Paul, through the Spirit, to not go up to Jerusalem?* Since all the material examined leads to the conclusion that Paul was being led of the Spirit, Acts 21:4 must be interpreted in the light of the rest of the material. When the Tyrenians received prophecies from the Holy Spirit, concerning Paul's fate in Jerusalem, they must have assumed that the prophecies were given to dissuade Paul from continuing on to Jerusalem. They grieved like the Ephesians and, like the Caesareans, implored him to abandon the trip. It was not the Holy Spirit, but those who loved Paul who sought to deter him from a journey that would end in imprisonment. However, Paul was *bound in the Spirit*. If he had given in to the pleas of the saints, he would have been disobedient to the Spirit.

Paul was like Jesus, who, knowing His fate, set His face toward Jerusalem, even though His disciples sought to restrain Him (John 11:8, 16; 18:4; etc.).

So, rather than ignoring the warning of the Holy Spirit, it is apparent that Paul obediently moved forward in union with the Holy Spirit, gladly accepting what lay ahead because God was leading him into it. The prophecies were to prepare him for his arrest.

II. A second thing to note in Paul's speech is the use of terms describing the Ephesian elders.

"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.

The group that he addressed consisted of the Ephesian elders (verse 17). In the sentence before us, he declares that the Holy Spirit had made the elders *overseers* (which in Old English is rendered, "bishop"), their role was to *shepherd* (Old English, "pastor"), the church. Thus we see that all three terms, *elder*, *overseer (bishop)*, and *shepherd (pastor)* refer to the same group of men. Their title was elder, their work was overseeing and shepherding the flock. This use of terms is consistent with their usage throughout the New Testament. This is the New Testament pattern.

*Therefore, I exhort the **elders** among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, **shepherd** the flock of God among you, **exercising oversight** not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;²⁷⁴*

*For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and **appoint elders** in every city as I directed you, namely, if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion. **For the overseer** must be above reproach as God's*

²⁷⁴ I Peter 5:1-2

*steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain...*²⁷⁵

III. A third important element in the speech is Paul's warnings about the behaviour of wolves.

*"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."*²⁷⁶

It was the responsibility of the elders to be on the lookout for wolfish behaviour, even among those who were elders. Wolves do not always come in from the outside. The difference between a leader who is a shepherd and a leader who is a wolf is that shepherds sacrifice themselves for the sheep, whereas wolves do what they do out of self interest, they use the sheep. In every generation, this is a serious problem.

Luke records the emotional scene that followed the address.

*When he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.³⁷ And they began to weep aloud and embraced Paul, and repeatedly kissed him,³⁸ grieving especially over the word which he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they were accompanying him to the ship.*²⁷⁷

Luke does not record any of the prayer. Some prayers are so filled with tears, so broken with emotion, that even though an holy benediction is left on the soul, no connected words are remembered. This was one of those occasions when grey haired men, who had been tempered by years of danger and suffering, wept like children. "An address so solemn, so tender, so heart crushing both to speaker and hearers, could be followed with propriety only by prostration before the throne of grace."²⁷⁸

Paul and his company boarded a freighter sailing for Tyre. This was the customary means of sea travel. Freighters always carried passengers, for an economical fee. The ship provided water, but the passengers provided their own food. The ship sailed out of the Aegean Sea into the Mediterranean, going around the west side of Cos, proceeding through the pass between Rhodes and the mainland, then stopping at Patara. From Patara, they boarded a freighter destined for Tyre, in Phoenicia (Syria). This ship sailed a direct southeastern course, passing south of Cyprus, without stopping.

Upon arriving at Tyre, Paul and his company sought out the local church, and spent seven days with them. Evidently the seven-day delay was the amount of time that it took to unload the ship's cargo, because at the end of seven days they boarded the same ship and sailed on to Ptolemais. Because of the seven-day delay, they were able to attend a Sunday service. As noted above, the Tyrennians tried to dissuade Paul from proceeding to Jerusalem, because of the dire

²⁷⁵ Titus 1:5-7

²⁷⁶ Acts 20:29-30

²⁷⁷ Acts 20:36-38

²⁷⁸ McGarvey, page 193

prophecies concerning the fate that awaited him on that city. When he and his company boarded the ship to continue their journey, the tearful prayer meeting of Miletus was repeated.²⁷⁹

The ship put into Ptolemais, where once again the company looked up the brethren and spent a day with them. From Ptolemais, they walked south to Caesarea where Philip the evangelist lived. Philip and his four daughters, who prophesied, hosted the travelers. During this time, the respected prophet, Agabus, visited the city and dramatically illustrated the prophetic word that the Holy Spirit had spoken through him.

*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.'"*²⁸⁰

The result was the repeated tearful plea to Paul to abort the trip. Paul's reply indicated his obedience to the will of God.

*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."*²⁸¹

Paul described the final resignation of Paul's friends,

*And since he would not be persuaded, we fell silent, remarking, "The will of the Lord be done!"*²⁸²

Accompanied by some of the brothers from Caesarea, the troupe headed on to Jerusalem, where a Cyprian Christian, living in Jerusalem, provided them lodging.²⁸³ The brothers in Jerusalem happily received Paul and the delegation from the Gentile Churches of Achaia, Macedonia, and Asia.

The Last Visit to Jerusalem

Acts 21:17-23:33

James and the Elders: Acts 21:17-26

In his letter to the Romans, written from either Corinth or Philippi, Paul had asked the Roman Christians to pray that the relief fund which he had collected for Jerusalem might be *acceptable to the saints*.²⁸⁴ On the day after their arrival in the city, Paul and his companions met with James and the elders. Evidently, all of the Twelve had left the city, and now James was the only one left with the standing of, *apostle*. Although some who seek to enforce a rigidly a co-equal form of church government do their best to picture James as an elder, he never was that. He always was an apostle, who served with the Jerusalem elders in leading the church. Any

²⁷⁹ Acts 20:38; 21:5.

²⁸⁰ Acts 21:11

²⁸¹ Acts 21:13

²⁸² Acts 21:14

²⁸³ Acts 21:16

²⁸⁴ Romans 15:31

objective comment on the configuration of the Jerusalem leadership has to acknowledge James as *primus inter pares* among them.

*And the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. 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;*²⁸⁵

It is curious that Luke does not mention the transference into the hands of the Jerusalem elders the offering sent by the Gentile churches – conveyed to Jerusalem by the band of representatives from these churches. When the Church in Antioch sent Barnabas and Saul to Jerusalem with the first fraternal offering, Luke carefully recorded that they put it into the hands of the elders..²⁸⁶ If Paul had not mentioned the Gentile offering in his speech before Felix, there would be no record of it's having arrived in Jerusalem.²⁸⁷ We comment on this further, below.

After warmly receiving Paul and his Gentile Christian brothers, James and the elders said, *we have a problem.*

*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."*²⁸⁸

Many members of the Jerusalem Church who still were *zealots for the law*, never quite fully accepted the letter that the Jerusalem Council had issued to the Gentile Christians. They not only disapproved of Paul's missionary policy, but they were troubled by the freedom that he exhibited toward the Mosaic Law and the traditions of Israel. A rumor had spread that not only was he exempting Gentile believers from the Law, but that he even advised Jewish Christians of the Diaspora to give up observing their ancestral customs – even the circumcision of their children.

Evidently, James and the elders did not believe these rumors. It is easy to see how the rumors could have arisen and also to see that they were distortions of the truth. A frequently observed trait of human nature is the inability to distinguish an essential from a non-essential. When someone gives up an old order, he may think that it is necessary to give up everything associated with the old order, even those things that are beneficial. This is a negative form of legalism. Such a mindset indicates that one is in bondage to his freedom.²⁸⁹ "Truly emancipated souls are

²⁸⁵ Acts 21:18-20

²⁸⁶ Acts 11:30

²⁸⁷ Acts 24:17

²⁸⁸ Acts 21:20-22

²⁸⁹ I recall a meeting some years ago in which we were discussing the best way to do a particular thing in the church (I don't remember what the issue was). One of the brothers was an ex-Baptist who had become a part of the leadership of the church. When one very reasonable idea was presented, the ex-Baptist brother replied, "Oh, we can't do it that way – that's the way the Baptists do it." Even though the procedure being recommended made the most sense and was the most effective, his rejection of his past had enslaved him to the point that it controlled what he was free to do and not do.

not in bondage to their emancipation.²⁹⁰ Because this is such a common behaviour, we would assume that some Jewish Christians had cast off all Jewishness, which would give rise to the rumor that Paul was advocating such a procedure.

Although Paul adamantly denied that Jewish law and customs had merit in salvation, he had the freedom to observe the traditions when it either was expedient for the mission, or of personal spiritual benefit. Thus, Paul observed the Passover and Pentecost in Jerusalem, as well as keeping some sort of a Nazarite vow. Paul conformed to the customs, or departed from them, according to the company that he kept, Jewish or Gentile. The impact of these incidentals on the mission was the supreme concern.

For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more. To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law; to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some. I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it.²⁹¹

Paul was dismayed when he heard that his Galatian converts had begun to observe *days and months and seasons and years*,²⁹² but these were Gentile converts. They had no good reason for adopting the Jewish sacred calendar, least of all for adopting it as a religious obligation. We would expect Paul to live as a Jew while in Jerusalem, because of his stated policy,

Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God; just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the profit of the many, so that they may be saved.²⁹³

Paul's consistent position was that Jewish Christians were free to observe or to not observe Jewish laws and customs, as long as they did not pin their eternal hope on these observances. However, there is no record of his having taught Jewish Christians to abandon their customs or traditions.

James and the elders reminded Paul of the concessions toward Gentiles that came out of the Jerusalem Council. They then suggested something that Paul could do to squelch the rumors. Four members of the church had taken a Nazarite vow. The time had come to discharge the vow, but that could not be done unless appropriate offerings were made in the temple. There was a significant expense involved in the purchase of the animals for the sacrifice, etc. If Paul would associate himself with these men, share in their purification ceremony and pay the expenses

²⁹⁰ Bruce, *Apostle of the Heart Set Free*, page 346

²⁹¹ I Corinthians 9:19-23

²⁹² Galatians 4:10

²⁹³ I Corinthians 10:31-33

involved in the discharge of the vow, this would demonstrate to all that he was a practicing Jew.²⁹⁴

Evidently through some unspecified situation, the four had become ceremonially unfit to go through the final ceremony, so they first had to be purified. If Paul were to be their sponsor and join them, he would have to go through the purification, because he too was ceremonially unclean. So, a purification ceremony would have to precede by one week, the presentation of the offerings and the discharge of the vow.

The first question that we encounter is, “How could Paul pay for this?” For each man (five, including Paul) three unblemished animals (a ram, an ewe, and a lamb) plus meat offerings and drink offerings had to be provided.²⁹⁵ This was a tidy sum. Paul was not a man of means. He often worked as a tentmaker to support himself. He would have to provide all of this within seven days. Olaf Moe suggests that this might be why Luke made no mention of the presentation of the offering to the Jerusalem elders.

“Now, either James must have assumed that Paul’s company would extend a helping hand and share the expenses with him or, since these were not likely men of wealth either, he may have taken for granted that a part of the collection for the poor in the mother congregation could be applied to this purpose. It really was a case of assistance to four impecunious men within the congregation; furthermore, it was a part of the purpose of this gift to promote a good relation between Gentile Christians and Jewish Christians. In this way a still better reception would be assured the collection within the congregation....

It is quite tempting to think that part of the collection was used as suggested above, and that the silence of the apostolic history is due to this fact....

The thanksgiving of James and the elders was drowned out in their altogether too deep anxiety for the quieting of the disturbed minds of their countrymen. And if part of the collection was to go for this purpose, then the remembrance of its transfer was too painful for Luke to dwell on it.²⁹⁶

Of course, all of this is speculation, but we cannot avoid wondering how Paul planned to pay the expenses in being a sponsor for the four men. Whatever Paul’s plans were for paying the required fees, the next day he and the four men went through the rite of purification – which probably involved no more than a ceremonial washing of their clothes and their bodies, the day before they entered the Temple. The following day, they appeared at the Temple and gave notice that they would appear in one week to offer the sacrifices that signaled the end of their vows.

Paul’s arrest, confinement, and transport to Caesarea: Acts 21:27-23:35

The prophetic warnings given to Paul enroute to Jerusalem shortly came to pass. Jews from Ephesus and the surrounding region knew Paul by sight. Near the end of the week prior to

²⁹⁴ Josephus reports that the elder Herod Agrippa paid the expenses of many Nazarites, as an act of piety *Antiquities of the Jews* xix, 294

²⁹⁵ Numbers 6:13-18

²⁹⁶ Olaf Moe, pages 414-415

the completion of the ceremonies ending the vow, some of the Asian Jews saw Paul in the Temple and immediately began to make an uproar. They previously had seen Paul and Trophimus (an Ephesian Gentile convert) walking together in the city. So, when they saw Paul in the Temple, they immediately surmised that he had Trophimus with him.

The outer court of the Temple, called, *The Court of the Gentiles*, had been enclosed by Herod the Great. Gentiles were free to enter this part of the Temple. This was the portion that Jesus “cleansed,” when he turned over the tables of the money changers, etc. Gentiles were prohibited, on the pain of death, from trespassing beyond the barrier that separated the outer court from the sacred inner courts. Inscriptions in Greek and Latin were posted at the portals between the two areas. Two slabs from the Temple of Herod with these inscriptions in Greek have been found by archaeologists (one discovered in 1871 and the other in 1935). The slabs read, *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.*²⁹⁷ According to Josephus, the Romans allowed the Jews to execute anyone who desecrated, blasphemed, or violated the Temple, even if that person were a Roman citizen.²⁹⁸

When the riot broke out, the temple police quickly closed the gates to the inner court to prevent the violence from spilling over into the inner chambers. The Romans had built the Tower of Antonio, on the northwest corner of the Temple grounds. The tower irritated the Jews, because the Roman officers could look from the tower into the various areas of the Temple, and monitor Jewish activity in the Temple environs. Seeing the riot, the sentry quickly informed the Roman commander (the *chiliarch*, an officer in command of 1000 troops). At once the commander, Claudius Lysias, ordered some centurions and their troops to descend the stairs and put a stop to the riot.

The officer ordered Paul to be bound to two soldiers and tried to find out what had caused the disturbance. The crowd, as is usual in crowds, was confused and various ones began to shout out different things. Since nothing made sense, the commander ordered that Paul be taken to the tower barracks. The soldiers carried Paul shoulder-high to get him through the crowd.

About three years before, a charismatic Egyptian claiming to be a prophet gathered a large number of followers. He ordered them to bivouac on the Mount of Olives, in preparation for delivering Jerusalem from Roman authority. He told them that he would pronounce a Divine command and the walls would fall down. When this happened, they were to march into the city and drive out the Romans. As ordered, his followers gathered on the mount and waited. The Romans sent troops to the mountain and put a quick end to the affair. Many Jews were killed, many were captured, and the rest fled in disarray. The Egyptian slipped away unnoticed. Since that time, many Jews wanted to get even with the Egyptian. The Roman commander surmised that Paul was that Egyptian and that the Jews were beating him to death because of his deception.

²⁹⁷ Bruce, *Acts*, page 409

²⁹⁸ Josephus as cited by Bruce, *Acts*, page 409, fn 48; and *Apostle of the Heart Set Free*, page 68 fn 21, page 349 fn 44

As they were ascending the stairs, probably at a landing, Paul spoke to the commander in educated Greek. The commander was surprised, and ask, *Do you speak Greek?* Paul replied,

*"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."*²⁹⁹

The commander gave Paul permission to speak and when began to address the crowd in Aramaic, the crowd became silent and listened. Paul recited his impeccable Jewish credentials, told of his conversion on the road to Damascus, the meeting with Ananias (whom Paul described *a man who as devout by the Law*) and his baptism. Next he told of his visit to Jerusalem, three years later and the vision of Jesus that came to him in the Temple. They listened until he reported that Jesus had commissioned him to go the Gentiles. At the mention of a mission to the Gentiles, the uproar began again.

The commander, intending to get to the bottom of things, ordered Paul to be brought into the barracks and whipped. Romans assumed that a person would be more inclined to tell the truth after he had been whipped. As they were tying Paul down, preparing for the whipping, he played his trump card – his Roman citizenship. He asked the centurion, who was the lector, *"Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman and uncondemned?"* When the centurion heard this, he rushed to his commander excitedly asking, *What are you about to do? This man is a Roman.* The commander came to Paul, still bound, and asked him if this were true. When Paul confirmed this, the commander commented that he had paid a great price to become a citizen. Paul informed him that he was born a citizen. The result was that not only the commander, but the other soldiers who had bound Paul, were filled with fear. They had almost committed a crime for which they would have had to answer to Caesar.

The next day, wanting to know why the Jews were so upset, the commander released Paul to the chief priests and the Sanhedrin. Paul began by speaking of his clear conscience. The high priest, Ananias, commanded one of the Jewish soldiers to stick Paul on the mouth. Paul's retort was quick and strong,

*Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?*³⁰⁰

Several in the room chastised Paul, *Do you revile God's High Priest?* Paul quickly apologized for his remarks, saying that he did not know that Ananias was the High Priest.³⁰¹ His reply could be understood as meaning, "I would not have recognized as High Priest, a man who would order a witness to be stricken on the mouth."

²⁹⁹ Acts 21:39

³⁰⁰ Acts 23:3

³⁰¹ Ananias was a man of poor reputation. The High Priesthood had become an office that the Romans, for a fee, bestowed upon those who were of the proper connection. Josephus wrote that this Ananias appropriated the tithes that should have gone to the rank and file of the priests. Rabbinical tradition preserved a popular song lampooning Ananias' gluttony. He was murdered by Zealots in 66 AD. See Bruce, *Apostle, of the Heart Set Free*, page 351.

Paul, taking note of the fact that he was in a mixed crowd of Sadducees and Pharisees, took advantage their differences. The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection, the Pharisees did. This had been a major battle for many decades. Jesus faced this controversy on the Great Day of Questions, putting the Sadducees to silence.³⁰²

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!"³⁰³

Immediately partisan shouting began to take place in the council. The Pharisees began declaring that Paul should be let go, after all, he may have been spoken to by an angel. The Sadducees were equally as violent on the other side. The commander, observing all of this from his vantage point in the tower, fearing that Paul would be pulled asunder by the two parties, sent troops down to interrupt the meeting and to bring Paul safely into the garrison.

The night following this episode, Paul had another vision

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."³⁰⁴

Once again, God's sovereign hand is displayed in all that has happened since Paul's arrival in Jerusalem and the events that followed. Paul was going to Rome, but not as an itinerant preacher. He was going as a Roman prisoner, and because of that he would be able to share the Gospel with those who were members of Caesar's household. Indeed, "the Lord moves in mysterious ways."

About forty Jews took an oath that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul. They plotted to have the Sanhedrin ask the commander to have Paul come back to finish the meeting that was interrupted the day before. Several of them would lie in ambush and they would overwhelm the escorts and kill Paul. Again, the hand of God is seen. Paul's nephew overheard the plotters and he came to the barracks and told Paul. Paul had one of the soldiers take the boy to the commander. When the commander was informed of the plot, he decided to send Paul to the regional governor, Felix, at Caesarea – 62 miles to the northeast. He made certain that no Jewish zealot could interfere by ordering a troop of 200 soldiers and 70 horsemen escort Paul out of the city at 9 PM. The commander wrote a letter to Felix, explaining the situation. This was a forced march for the infantry, because it was 35 miles from Jerusalem to Antipatris, which they reached the next day. At that point, the foot-soldiers returned to Jerusalem; the cavalry escorted Paul the remaining 27 miles to Caesarea

The governor read the letter that accompanied the prisoner, and asked Paul from which province he came. From this point on the governor himself would take charge of the proceedings.

Caesarea and the Appeal to Caesar

Acts 24:1-26:32

³⁰² Matthew 22:23ff

³⁰³ Acts 23:6

³⁰⁴ Act 23:11

Felix, the Roman governor of Judea, wanting to make sense of the confusing affairs surrounding Paul, did nothing until Jewish accusers arrived from Jerusalem. The High Priest Ananias and some Jewish elders, accompanied by an attorney named, Tertullus arrived after a five days.

After the group had assembled before the governor, he asked Paul to be brought in. Tertullus began with words flattering Felix, then leveled his accusations against Paul. Essentially, Tertullus said that Paul was a trouble-maker who had tried to desecrate the Temple. He slyly said that the Jews could have handled things just fine, but the Commander, Lysias, violently interfered. The other Jews present began to jump in and add their accusations.

When Tertullus and Paul's accusers had been given sufficient time to make their statements, Felix then nodded at Paul, indicating that it was time for him to respond. Paul began by saying that he was eager for Felix to hear the story, because Felix had years of experience dealing with Jewish matters. Paul declared himself innocent of all charges, repeating the story of his recent arrival in Jerusalem and his innocent behaviour in the city. He declared that indeed, he was a follower of The Way, believing all of the prophets, and having the same hope that his accusers had, the hope of the resurrection. He said that he and some other Jews from Asia had brought an offering to Jerusalem, and that these Asian Christian Jews should have been brought to Caesarea to testify, if a truly impartial trial were to be held. He then declared, that the only reason that he was in custody was because of his belief in the resurrection of the dead.

Felix had knowledge of The Way. So, realizing what the Jews were up to, he said that he would put off his ruling until the commander of the Jerusalem garrison Lysias, could come down to Caesarea and give a report. He gave orders for the centurion to keep Paul in custody, but to allow him to have a measure of freedom and that any who wanted to visit him should be allowed to do so.

Several days after the accusers from Jerusalem had gone back home, Felix and his wife, Drusilla, who was a Jewess, sent for Paul and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit began dealing with Felix, as Paul spoke of righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come. Felix, realizing his moral state, became fearful as he heard Paul speak about the judgment to come. He ended the interview and told Paul, *Go away, for the present, and when I find time, I will summon you.*

Felix kept Paul imprisoned for two years, and during that time developed a friendly attitude toward Paul, summoning him frequently for conversation. Felix kept Paul in prison for two reasons:

- Felix hoped that Paul or one of his friends would pay a bribe to get Paul off the hook.
- Because of the Jews, it was politically advantageous to keep Paul in custody.

After two years, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. Three days after his arrival at his headquarters at Caesarea, Festus decided to get a look at the province that he oversaw. He traveled to Jerusalem. While in Jerusalem, Paul's influential enemies asked Festus to have Paul brought to Jerusalem, where they could accuse him before Festus. They planned to kill Paul as he and his escorts traveled from Caesarea to Jerusalem. Festus, who had been briefed by his predecessor, said that Paul was in custody at Caesarea and that he, Festus, was getting ready to head back there. He said that if they wanted to bring charges, let them come to Caesarea.

When Festus returned to Caesarea, he took his tribunal seat and ordered that Paul be brought in. The accusers, who probably had accompanied Festus on his trip back to Caesarea, gathered around and began to level charges against Paul, none of which they could prove.

Paul replied that he had not violated any law, either of Caesar or of the Jews. Festus, being an astute politician, asked Paul if he would be willing to go to Jerusalem and there be tried before Festus. Paul replied that he was standing before Caesar's tribunal at that time and in that place. Realizing his delicate position, since Festus seemed to be willing to accommodate the Jews, Paul made a life changing statement: *I appeal to Caesar*. This momentarily threw a monkey wrench in the machinery. Festus conferred with his legal advisors and then said to Paul, *You have appealed to Caesar, to Caesar, you shall go*. Any Roman citizen had the right to appeal to Caesar for final judgment. He was the Supreme Court of the Roman Empire.

A few days later, Festus was visited by Herod Agrippa II and his sister, Bernice.³⁰⁵ Agrippa was the "king" of neighboring provinces. This obviously was a courtesy call on the new governor. Festus recited for Agrippa the whole story of Paul's arrest and confinement. Agrippa must have known about the Way, but he had not personally heard one of the exponents of this teaching. He asked to hear Paul for himself.

The following day, Caesarea was witness to a big display of pomp, as Agrippa, Bernice, and several prominent city officials made their way to the tribunal. As this august group prepared to summon Paul, Festus left it up to Agrippa to conduct the proceedings in any manner that he saw fit. Agrippa had no authority to conduct a trial in Judea; for that matter, since Paul had appealed to Caesar, he could not be tried further by any provincial tribunal. This was an informal inquiry. Festus was in a quandary, since he did not know what he could say in a report, explaining why this man was imprisoned, much else why it was necessary for him to appeal to Caesar. He hoped that Agrippa could give provide him with something solid for the report.

As the session commenced, Agrippa immediately told Paul to take his liberty and to speak for himself. Paul said almost the same thing to Agrippa that he had said to Felix,

"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."³⁰⁶

Paul repeated the same themes that he had recited in earlier trials. He recounted his persecution of the Church, his conversion, and then his consequent ministry. He then declared that he stood before the king accused of nothing other than what Moses and the prophets had predicted about the death and resurrection of the Messiah. When Paul spoke of the resurrection, Festus interrupted him and told Paul that his great learning was driving him mad. Paul boldly but respectfully responded,

³⁰⁵ Herod Agrippa I, father of Herod Agrippa II and Bernice, had given his daughter in marriage to his brother, Herod, king of Chalchis. She bore him two sons, but when he died, she went to live with her brother. Later, she married the King of Cilicia, but left him and returned to live with her brother. The Roman general Titus was quite taken with Bernice, who lived with him for a time. He would have married her, were it not for Roman opposition to the marriage. Because she became a political liability, Titus abandoned her.

³⁰⁶ Acts 26:2-3

"I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I utter words of sober truth."³⁰⁷

Paul then addressed Agrippa,

"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."³⁰⁸

Notice that Paul began in the same manner that he had begun at Athens. He started where his audience was, and sought to take his hearer where he wanted them to go. The events which fulfilled the ancient prophecies were not any esoteric mystery, whose devotees were pledged to secrecy, but everything had been done in the most public manner possible, including the death and resurrection of Christ. Anyone who believed the prophets and compared them to the events of Jesus' earthly sojourn had to acknowledge an affinity between the two.

Agrippa was embarrassed by Paul's appeal. Paul hoped that Agrippa would listen with more than intellectual interest, but that the interest would grow into something more. Surely such an expert on Jewish matters and the scriptures would not miss the obvious conclusion. Agrippa could not admit, in front of Festus, that he believed he prophets and thus lend support to Paul's case. On the other hand, he could not say that he did not believe the prophets; to do that would mean that he would forfeit all standing with the Jews. Because he found himself in somewhat of a corner, his reply was a bit of a brush-off. Bruce well comments,

"So he turned Paul's appeal aside with a smile: 'In short,' he said, 'you are trying to make me play the Christian' – for that seems to be the meaning of his words. He was not going to be maneuvered into anything like that!"³⁰⁹

Paul did not let the comment go. He responded with sincerity,

And Paul said, "I would wish to God, that whether in a short or long time, not only you, but also all who hear me this day, might become such as I am, except for these chains."³¹⁰

After the interview, Festus, Agrippa, Bernice, and the others all agreed that even if Paul were mad, he was completely innocent, as far as Roman law was concerned.³¹¹ He could have been released immediately, were it not for the fact that he had appealed to Caesar. Paul now must be sent to Rome to be heard in Caesar's supreme court.

³⁰⁷ Acts 26:25

³⁰⁸ Acts 26:26-27

³⁰⁹ Bruce, *Acts*, page 471

³¹⁰ Acts 2:29

³¹¹ The imperial policy toward Christians was one of leniency until 62 AD, which was a turning point in Nero's career. Several things happened that year, including Nero's divorce of Octavia and his marriage to Poppaea, who was a warm friend of the Jews – thus an enemy of Christianity. At about this time, it was becoming increasingly apparent to the Roman authorities that Christianity was not simply a movement within Judaism and thus did not share the recognition that Jewish congregations were granted.

The Journey to Rome

Acts 27:1-28:15

The Voyage and Shipwreck: Acts 27:1-44

“Luke’s narrative of the voyage and shipwreck of Paul on his way to Italy is a small classic in its own right, as graphic a piece of descriptive writing as anything in the Bible. It has long been acknowledged as ‘one of the most instructive documents for the knowledge of ancient seamanship.’ It bears clear evidence of being the account of an eyewitness, who viewed the sea through Greek eyes and, while not himself a seaman versed in the technical vocabulary of sailing, described his experience in his own vigorous language.”³¹²

When Festus decided that it was time to send Paul to Rome, to face Caesar’s court, he placed Paul and several other prisoners under the charge of a centurion named, Julius. Luke clearly was a fellow participant with Paul in all that is described. The “we” pronoun is consistent from this point onward in Acts. Because he was an “on the scene” reporter, he was able to give amazing detail concerning this trip, including even the name of the cohort to which Julius belonged, *the Augustan* (This title was bestowed on several auxiliary cohorts that had given exemplary service to the Empire).

The ship on which they embarked was registered in Adramyttium.³¹³ It was a coasting vessel, that would call at various ports along the Asian coast. At one of these, Julius planned to find a grain ship headed for Italy, whereby he and his soldiers would transport the prisoners under his charge. Aristarchus, one of Paul’s companions from Thessalonica,³¹⁴ also was traveling with Paul and Luke. Although Aristarchus is not mentioned in the balance of the account, he must have continued with the party, because in the prison epistles Paul mentions him as being a companion with him during the Roman imprisonment. Ramsey argues that Luke and Aristarchus may have traveled in the guise of Paul’s slaves. In this role, they would have been allowed to be with him at all times and also given Paul more prestige. A penniless man would not have had much prestige in the eyes of the soldiers as would a man with slaves.³¹⁵ This seems improbable – it is not hinted at in the narrative and it also would require deception on the part of the missionaries, which would be out of character for men of God. Bruce speculates that Luke may have signed on as the ship’s physician and Aristarchus was a paying passenger.³¹⁶

The day after they set sail the ship put in at Sidon, 69 miles north of Caesarea. At Sidon, Paul was given permission to go ashore and spend time with the Christian community in the port. We would assume that he was accompanied by a soldier. Throughout the trip the centurion showed significant kindness to Paul (One cannot miss the manner in which Roman centurions consistently are pictured in a good light in the New Testament). Another thing that cannot be

³¹² Bruce, *Acts*, page 474

³¹³ A prominent seaport in Mysia, south of Troas.

³¹⁴ Acts 19:29, 20:4, 27:2; Colossians 4:10; Philemon 24

³¹⁵ Ramsey, *St. Paul, Roman Citizen and Traveler*, page 316

³¹⁶ Bruce, *Acts*, page 478

missed is the manner in which the centurion alone bore the full responsibility for the soldiers and the prisoners, admirably discharging his duty.³¹⁷

Leaving Sidon, the ship sailed to the east and north side of Cyprus – the lee side of the island. Leaving the cover of Cyprus and heading toward the south coast of Asia Minor, the ship entered a stretch of open sea that required patient and skilled seamanship, since they were sailing directly into the prevailing winds. During the last portion of their trip they stayed close to the coast, where they would have been helped by land breezes and an east to west sea current that ran along the coast.

“The Adramyttian ship crept on from point to point up the coast, taking advantage of every opportunity to make a few miles, and lying at anchor in the shelter of the winding coast, when the westerly wind made progress impossible.”³¹⁸

In this manner they finally came to Andriake, the seaport of Myra.³¹⁹ Myra, whose bay was well situated to shield a windward ship, was a major depot of the imperial grain service. Egypt was the main granary of Rome and grain ships from Alexandria routinely sailed north across the Mediterranean Sea to Myra, before beginning their westward journey to Italy. Myra was due north of Alexandria, Egypt. The stability of Rome depended on the regularity of the grain trade between Alexandria and the Italian ports of Puteoli and Ostia.

The centurion knew that at Myra he could find passage for his soldiers and prisoners on a grain ship heading for Italy. Indeed this was done, and after the centurion and his company boarded the vessel, the ship left Myra and began the westward journey. Because they were sailing against the wind, making any headway was difficult and slow. The helmsman directed the ship along the coast to Cnidus, then headed south-southwest to the eastern coast of Crete (the leeward side), near Salmone. From thence they battled the winds and made their way west and south to the small bay called, “Fair Havens,” on the southern tip of Crete. The town of Lasae was nearby and they could have found in that city adequate quarters in which to winter. However, the port was not totally protected from the severe winds that blew during the winter – about ½ of the compass was exposed. Luke comments that by this time the Fast has passed (referring to *Yom Kippur*). YK fell on October 5, in 59 AD. The dangerous sailing season was reckoned as being from September 14 through November 11. So, they clearly were in the dangerous sailing season. After November 11, all ships stayed in port until late February, at the earliest – usually ships did not venture into the open sea until March 5.

Based on his experience, of earlier shipwrecks, Paul advised the centurion to stay put at Fair Havens. He said that if they tried to sail onward they would suffer both loss of life and cargo. A council was held and the ship’s owner and sailors wanted to press on to the more secure harbor of Phoenix, 40 miles to the west. The centurion, took the advice of the nautical experts and so

³¹⁷ A centurion nominally was in charge of 100 men, but in time that title came to be applied to non-commissioned officers who had other special duties. He was the equivalent of a captain in the modern army. Centurions were the backbone of the Roman army. Polybius wrote, “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 star fighting wantonly, but able when overwhelmed and hard-pressed to stand fast and die at their post.” (As quoted by Bruce, *Acts*, page 202)

³¹⁸ Ramsey, *St. Paul the Traveler and Roman Citizen*, page 317

³¹⁹ Myra was about 3 ½ miles inland.

when a moderate south wind began to blow, they lifted the anchor and began what they thought would be a short trip to Phoenix. Sailing close the shoreline, all went well until a violent northeast wind from Mount Ida burst upon them. A sudden change from a south wind to a violent northerly wind is common in these seas. The initial impact is toronadic. Luke describes the wind as a typhoon with toronadic traits (ἄνεμος τυφωνικός *anemos tufhonikos* – literally, “a wind like a whirlwind”). The ancients called this sudden northeast wind an *Euraquilo*, a curious combination of Greek (εὐρος *euros* – meaning “east wind”) and Latin (*aquilo* – meaning, “north wind”). Today, in the Mediterranean, such a wind is called, a *gregale*.

The helmsman tried to turn the ship into the wind, but he was unable to do so. So, they turned away from the wind and let it take them where it would. In time they came under the shelter of a small island, called, *Clauda*. With this respite they did all that they could to prepare for the next wind. Usually, when a storm arose, the crew hoisted on board the ship the dingy that was dragged along behind the vessel. The wind had come so suddenly that they had not been able to do this, so the water-filled little row boat was hoisted on board with the aid of crew and passengers. The second thing that was done was to wrap the under-sea portion of the ship in cables. These cables were fitted with hooks, etc, that allowed the sailors to jump into the water and put the cables around the hull, in an effort to keep the violent sea from breaking up the ship.

The next action that they took is unclear. The crew was afraid that if the wind persisted for several days, they would be driven into the Greater Syrtis (quicksands off the African coast, west of Cyrene). Luke, not being a sailor, used the term, σκεδος (*skeuos*), meaning “thing” or “instrument,” i.e., “they let down the thing.” The KJV translators, decided that the “thing” was the top sails. The NIV and NAS translators decided that the “thing” was a sea anchor.

Having done all that they could do, they turned the ship to a starboard track (the right side of the ship was turned to the wind) and with their storm sails, allowed themselves to be driven west and a wee bit north at about 1 ½ miles per hour.

The next day, the storm was so violent that the crew jettisoned some of the cargo and the day thereafter they began to throw overboard the tackle. The only tackle that would have been heavy enough to make a difference in buoyancy was the mainyard, the spar that was used to support the main sail – it was as long as the ship, it would have required passengers and crew to hoist it overboard. The storm continued unabated for eleven days, in which the voyagers saw neither sun nor moon. Everyone lost hope; many of their supplies had been lost or ruined; preparing food would have been very difficult; they went days without eating. Then, Paul had a word from God.

*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. Yet now I urge you to keep up your courage, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. 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."*³²⁰

³²⁰ Acts 27:21-25

Paul could not resist saying, “I told you so.” However, his previous advice had been based on human wisdom. This time, he had a word from God.

Indeed, after fourteen days of enduring this ordeal, as they were being driven about in the southern end of the Adriatic sea, about midnight the sailors began to hear breakers and they knew that they were near land. They began to take soundings to determine how much draft they needed to avoid going aground, and found that they were indeed moving into shallower water.

James Smith was an experienced yachtsman and a classical scholar. In 1848, he wrote a study of Paul’s voyage and shipwreck.³²¹ Smith was very familiar with the Mediterranean, especially the region described in Acts 27. He provides a wonderful amount of information concerning Paul’s experience. One especially noteworthy bit of information that validates Luke’s record is the matter of geography and timing. Smith relates how he made careful inquiries of experienced Mediterranean navigators in order to ascertain the mean-rate drift of a ship of this class and kind, laid to in such a gale. The conclusion reached was about 36 miles in 24 hours. The soundings recorded in Acts 27:28 indicate that the ship was passing Koura, a point on the east coast of Malta, destined for what now is known as St. Paul’s Bay.

But the distance from Clauda to the point of Koura... is 476.6 miles, which at the rate as deduced from the information... would take exactly thirteen days, one hour and twenty-one minutes... The coincidence of the actual bearing of St. Paul’s Bay from Clauda and the direction in which the ship must have driven in order to avoid Syrtis, is - if possible - still more striking than that of the time actually consumed, and the calculated time... Hence, according to these calculations, a ship starting late in the evening from Clauda would, by midnight on the 14th, be less than three miles from the entrance of St. Paul’s Bay. I admit that a coincidence so very close as this, is to a certain extent accidental, but it is an accident which could not have happened had there been any inaccuracy on the part of the author of the narrative with regard to the numerous incidents upon which the calculations are founded. Or had the ship been wrecked anywhere but at Malta, For there is no other place agreeing, either in name or description, within the limits to which we are tied down by calculations founded upon the narrative.³²²

The sailors, fearful of going aground, decided to lay out four anchors. Some of them, pretending to engage themselves in this effort, lowered the dinghy and planned to head for shore in the rowboat. Paul, realizing what was afoot, told the soldiers that unless everyone remained on board, no one would be saved. No information is given as to why the sailor’s presence on board was necessary to save the rest of the passengers. By now the centurion had learned that it was a good idea to listen to Paul and so the ropes that held the dinghy were cut.

With the energy of the storm abated, Paul urged them to take nourishment. They were going to need strength and stamina for what lay ahead. He prayed, broke bread and ate; the others then followed his example.

³²¹ J. Smith, *The Voyage and Shipwreck of St. Paul* (London, 1848, fourth printing 1880)

³²² Smith, page 126-128, as quoted by Bruce, *Acts*, page 489

The next morning, they could see land, but they did not recognize it. In order to have as shallow a draft as possible, they began casting the cargo of wheat overboard. They then cut the ropes that held the rudder, hoisted what sail they could and began heading for shore, intending to run the ship aground in shallow water. However, before they could get close to the beach, the ship hit a reef and they were unable to free the vessel. The sea was battering the stern and the ship began to break up. Because a Roman soldier had to forfeit his life if he lost a prisoner, the soldiers planned to kill the prisoners. The commander, wanting to keep Paul alive and hoping to get him to Rome, ordered the soldiers to let the prisoners jump overboard and swim for shore. Indeed, those who could swim did so, and the rest made it to shore on various debris. All 276 who were on board the ship made it to shore safely.

The sojourn on Melita (Malta): Acts 28:1-10

The castaways learned that they were on Melita. The island's inhabitants showed great kindness to the ship's company, quickly running and preparing a fire, because of the cold rain. As Paul laid some sticks on the fire, a viper, warmed by the fire, came out of the wood stack and fastened itself on Paul's hand. The natives immediately concluded that Paul must be a murderer, who even though he survived the shipwreck was destined for death by the Gods. However, when Paul shook off the snake and did not swell up and drop dead, they changed their minds and thought that he was a god.

The leading man of the island was Publius. His father was sick. Paul went to the sick man, laid hands on him and he was healed. This resulted in people from all over the island's bringing their sick to Paul, who ministered healing to them. Because of the respect so engendered, when the group sailed away three months later, the islanders outfitted them with all that they might need.

Melita to Rome: Acts 28:11-16

They sailed from Melita in another Alexandrian grain ship, which had as its figurehead, Castor and Pollux. The first day they were able to sail to Syracuse, on Sicily, where they waited three days for favorable wind. From thence they sailed to Rhegium, on the toe of Italy, where they waited a day for a south wind to take them through the straits. The next day they arrived in the great port of Puteoli. For unnamed reasons, the party remained at Puteoli for seven days. There was a church in Puteoli and Paul and his companions enjoyed the company of these brethren during this time. It seems that some of the Puteoli brothers rushed on to Rome to tell of Paul's coming, because as the centurion and his charges walked to Rome on the Appian Way, they were met by Roman Christians at the Appii, 43 miles outside of Rome. Then, ten miles further, at the Three Taverns they were met by more Christians coming to accompany the party the rest of the way into the city.

It had been about three years since Paul had sent his letter to the Roman Church, telling them of his desire to visit them. Now, the wish was being fulfilled, in a manner that none of them could have predicted. The letter to Rome, plus Luke's description of the Roman welcoming committee, gives proof that Paul did not plant the Roman Church.

Paul in Rome: Acts 28:16-31

Paul was allowed to stay in his own rented quarters in Rome. He was lightly chained to a soldier. The guard was changed every four hours, night and day. Since was in his own quarters, he had great freedom. He quickly followed his consistent pattern of seeking to present the Gospel to the Jews. He could not visit a synagogue, chained to a Gentile soldier, so he invited

the leading men among the Roman Jews to visit him in his quarters. On the third day after his arrival in Rome, they arrived at his quarters to interview him. Paul began the discourse by summarizing his story, and concluding with the statement that he was in chains because of his proclamation of the hope of Israel. The Jewish leaders said that they had not received any word from Jerusalem concerning Paul, but that they would like to hear from him because they had heard all sorts of things about “this sect.”

On a set day, a company of Jews came to Paul’s apartment to hear what he had to say. He reasoned with them concerning statements about the Messiah in both the Law and the prophets. He sought to prove to them that Jesus was the very one of whom the prophets spoke. The session went on all day. As a result of the ensuing dialogue, some believed and some did not. The discussion between the Jews themselves became intense and confusing. At the end of the session, since confusion had taken the edge off of any conviction, Paul quoted Isaiah 6:9-10 (he quoted the Septuagint version, which differs slightly from the Hebrew text upon which our English Bible is based).

*Go, and say to this people, Ye shall hear indeed, but ye shall not understand; and ye shall see indeed, but ye shall not perceive. For the heart of this people has become gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.*³²³

After quoting Isaiah, Paul declared,

*"Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will also listen."*³²⁴

For two years, Paul waited to appear before Caesar. During that time, his door was open to all who would come to visit with him and hear the Gospel. While in Ephesus during his third missionary journey, Paul had expressed his intention to witness for Christ in Rome

*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."*³²⁵

While Paul was a prisoner in Jerusalem, the Lord Jesus appeared to him in a vision and stated that his aim to witness in Rome would be fulfilled.

*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."*³²⁶

Now, this hope and promise were reality.

While imprisoned, Paul wrote Philippians, Colossians and Philemon, and Ephesians. After two years, Paul appeared before Caesar’s court. During the trial and while waiting for a ruling, he

³²³ LXE Version, Isaiah 6:8c - 10

³²⁴ Acts 28:28

³²⁵ Acts 19:21

³²⁶ Acts 23:11

apparently was confined in the palace barracks (more on this below) and was unable to witness to anyone, other than the Praetorian guard and members of Caesar's household.

Paul's imprisonment had lasting effects on the status of Christianity in the empire.

His appeal to Caesar brought Christianity directly to the attention of the Roman government and compelled the civil authorities to pass judgment on its legality. If it was to be allowed as a *religio licita* (a permitted cult), the persecution it would be illegal, and its security would be assured. If, on the other hand, it was adjudged to be a *religio illicita* (a forbidden cult), then the ensuing persecution would only advertise it and offer an opportunity for a demonstration of its power. In the decade of the Gentile mission from AD 46 to 56, and in the four years³²⁷ of Paul's imprisonment, the church came out from under the banner of Judaism and formed its own ranks as an independent movement. It was now ready for even greater advances in missionary expansion.³²⁸

Various authors have speculated about Luke's silence concerning the result of Paul's trial. The simplest and most obvious reason is that *Acts* was written before the trial had been completed. Luke must have written most of *Acts* while he was with Paul during his house-arrest. The statement that Paul spent two years in his rented quarters in Rome³²⁹ was written after he had first appeared before Caesar, and was housed in the palace barracks, awaiting a ruling.

What happened at the close of the two years? Several things come into play to assist us in completing the picture. First, noting the consistent ruling of the lesser Roman authorities – Gallio in Corinth; Claudius Lysias, the Roman commander of Jerusalem; Felix and Festus, Roman proconsuls in Judea; and even the Jewish King Agrippa – that Paul had not violated any Roman law, we would assume that Nero would have made the same decision and released Paul.

Not only was Paul visited by Roman believers, while a prisoner in Rome, but he kept up a lively contact with his friends and co-workers in the provinces. Notable among these were:

- Timothy, who was with him when he wrote letters to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Philippians (Colossians 1:1; Philemon 1; Philippians 1:1)
- John Mark sent greetings to the Colossians (4:10) and to Philemon (23)
- The Jewish Christian, Jesus Justus (Colossians 4:11)
- The Gentile Christian, Demas (Colossians 4:14; Philemon 24; II Timothy 4:10)
- Luke and Aristarchus, who had accompanied Paul all the way from Caesarea to Rome were with him at this time (Aristarchus is mentioned in Colossians 4:10)
- Epaphras (Colossians 4:12; Philemon 23)
- Onesimus, a slave who became a believer during Paul's imprisonment (Philemon), was assigned to accompany Tychicus in delivering the Epistle to the Colossians (4:18)
- Tychicus (according to the text upon which the KJV is based, Tychicus & Onesimus served as Paul's amanuensis in penning the Epistle to the Ephesians) was one of the messengers assigned with delivering the prison epistles (Ephesians 6:21; Colossians 4:7,18)

³²⁷ Tenney counts the beginning portion and the ending portion of a year as a year

³²⁸ Tenney, page 329

³²⁹ Acts 28:30

The Outcome of the Trial and Paul's Final History

Testimony of the Epistles

In the prison epistles themselves there are important hints concerning Paul's prison experience and probable outcome of his trial. Two epistles have special significance in the search for Paul's fate: Philemon and Philippians.

In his letter to Philemon, Paul is so optimistic about the outcome of his trial, that he looks forward to visiting his friend,

*At the same time also prepare me a lodging, for I hope that through your prayers I will be given to you.*³³⁰

Statements in the Philippian letter give important information on Paul's circumstances when he wrote that letter. Here is a key passage from which we will extract three thoughts.

Philippians 1:12-25; 2:24

1. *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,*
2. *and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear. Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will; the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment. the latter do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel; What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice.*
3. *Yes, and I will rejoice, for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith, ... and I trust in the Lord that I myself also will be coming shortly.*

1. Only after Paul had been given the opportunity to defend himself before the court and qualified officials had received a favorable impression of him, could it become clear to

³³⁰ Philemon 22

all that he was wrongfully suspected of political crimes. During the trial, while he probably was housed in the Praetorian barracks and thus exposed to the entire Praetorian guard, it would have become apparent to *all* that he was imprisoned for the cause of Christ and not for political crimes.

2. Before his trial, the Roman Christians would have felt the shadow that suspicion concerning Paul would have cast on the entire group. No doubt they felt somewhat suppressed in speaking the Word of God without fear. After his defense, when he had proven his innocence before the court, the other Christians began to breathe more easily and testified more courageously for their Lord. While in his private apartment, he had been free to preach and witness. When he wrote Philippians, he was restricted; his situation had changed. Most students of Paul's life deduce that he was confined in the Praetorian barracks during the course of the trial. This restriction, combined with the above mentioned removal of the shadow from the church, emboldened some who were jealous of him to build up their reputations, without having to compete with Paul. From Paul's comments, they obviously did not venture to preach another Gospel, since Paul rejoices that they were preaching the Gospel, regardless of the motive.
3. The way that things were going, Paul was convinced that he would not be executed, but would remain alive in order to bless and encourage the Philippian believers. A key factor in this was the faithful prayer of the Philippian Church.

Unless Paul and the Roman Christians were much mistaken in their judgment of the situation at the time that the Philippian letter was written, Paul must have been found innocent and released shortly after writing the epistle.

Extra Biblical Sources

1. Eusebius Ecclesiastical History

Eusebius, who died in 340 AD, wrote his Ecclesiastical History sometime after the Council of Nicea, 325 AD. He recorded the universal tradition concerning Paul's release and further mission activity.

Luke, that wrote the Acts of the Apostles, after showing that Paul passed two whole years at Rome as a prisoner at large, and that he preached gospel without restraint, brings his history to a close. After pleading his cause, he is said to have been sent again upon the ministry of preaching, and after a second visit to the city, that he finished his life with martyrdom....Thus much we have said, to show that the martyrdom of the apostle did not take place at that period of his stay at Rome when Luke wrote his history.³³¹

2. Clement's Letter to Corinth

Clement wrote to the Corinthians in 96 AD. He wrote the letter from Rome in the name of the Romans. According to Irenaeus, Clement had been associated with both Peter and Paul. Clement wrote about the death of both of these leading apostles. In Chapter Four of Clement's Letter to the Corinthians, he laments the evil of envy and jealousy, citing Old

³³¹ Eusebius Pamphilius, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book II, Chapter XXII (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House) 1994, pages 74-75

Testament examples. In Chapter Five, he turns from the Old Testament to cite examples from “our own time.”

But not to dwell upon ancient examples, let us come to the most recent spiritual heroes. Let us take the noble examples furnished in our own generation. Through envy and jealousy, the greatest and most righteous pillars [[of the Church] have been persecuted and put to death. Let us set before our eyes the illustrious apostles. Peter, through unrighteous envy, endured not one or two, but numerous labors, and when he had at length suffered martyrdom, departed to the place of glory due to him. Owing to envy, Paul also obtained the reward of patient endurance, after being seven times thrown into captivity, compelled to flee, and stoned. 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. Thus was he removed from the world, and went into the holy place, having proved himself a striking example of patience.³³²

Clement, writing in a generation that knew the history of the apostles, stated that Paul preached to the extreme limit of the west. Writing from Rome, Clement could not possibly have meant, Rome, when he wrote that Paul reached the *extreme limit of the west*, which was as far west as Paul had traveled when the narrative in Acts closes. The extreme limit of the west was Spain, which of course was Paul’s intention,³³³ unrealized at the time that the narrative in Acts comes to a close. Clement not only had the epistles to study, but he knew the parties involved and had other sources available to him.

3. Miscellaneous sources

The Roman Register, discovered by the Italian, Muratori, toward the end of the Second Century, mentions Paul’s journey to Spain as an assured fact.

The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, composed about 170 AD, states that Paul went to Spain after a vision and was absent from Rome for one year.

4. The Pastoral Letters of Paul, clearly imply that Paul must have revisited his congregations in Macedonia and Asia, plus other places for the first time.

1 Timothy 1:3 *As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines,*

Although some have tried to fit this situation into Acts 20:1, it is impossible to do so. Timothy clearly was traveling with Paul and was named as the co-sender of the letter to Corinth, written from Macedonia. Thus, Timothy could not have been left behind at Ephesus. Nor was it Paul’s intention to meet Timothy in Ephesus (I Timothy 3:13; 4:13) since Timothy accompanied Paul throughout this time (Romans 16:21; Acts 20:4). The only conclusion that can be reached is that I Timothy 1:3 describes an episode that took place after Paul was released from prison and involved in visiting existing churches.

³³² *Clement to the Corinthians*, Chapter V, The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume I, Edited by A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (Albany, OR, Books for the Ages, AGES Software) 1997

³³³ Romans 15:24-28

Titus 1:5; 3:12: *For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, ... 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.*

There is no place in the Acts record that this scenario could fit. Should one try to fit it into the time that Paul was leaving Ephesus for Greece, he must face the impossible task of explaining why Paul would write to Titus that he planned to spend winter in Nicopolis, (on the western seacoast of Achaia) whereas he wrote to the Corinthians that he planned to spend the winter in Corinth (I Cor. 16:16ff) which he did.

We can only conclude that this refers to Paul's activity after his release and before his second imprisonment.

2 Timothy 4:20 *Erastus remained at Corinth, but Trophimus I left sick at Miletus.*

Trophimus traveled with Paul to Jerusalem, at the close of the Third journey. They stopped at Miletus, but Paul did not leave him there. On the contrary, he was the man with Paul in Jerusalem whose presence caused the uproar that resulted in Paul's imprisonment. One might argue that Trophimus was sick for just a few days, then joined Paul in Jerusalem. This doesn't make any sense at all, because Paul would not, five years later, comment to Timothy that he left Trophimus sick at Miletus, as a current situation. The only conclusion is that the reference is to a circumstance that followed Paul's release.

2 Timothy 4:13 *When you come bring the cloak which I left at Troas with Carpus, and the books, especially the parchments.*

Paul did stop at Troas on his journey to and from Macedonia, and according to Acts 20:6-12 he remained for a week. Is it reasonable to assume that he would not have missed his cloak and his parchments (probably Scriptures) for five years? Once again, we find a situation that must have been true during the season following Paul's release from prison.

The Second Epistle to Timothy

The mood of this epistle indicates that Paul was in a severe prison when he wrote it. It is totally different from the letters that he wrote during the period described in Acts 28. He not only was chained as a malefactor (2:9), so that Onesiphorus had difficulty in finding him in prison (1:17), but one after another his co-workers had left him (4:9-10), and he sees nothing ahead but martyrdom (4:6) and entrance into the Kingdom of God (4:18). Thus, he states, *I have finished the course* (4:7). Undoubtedly, this was Paul's last letter before his execution, written during his second imprisonment.

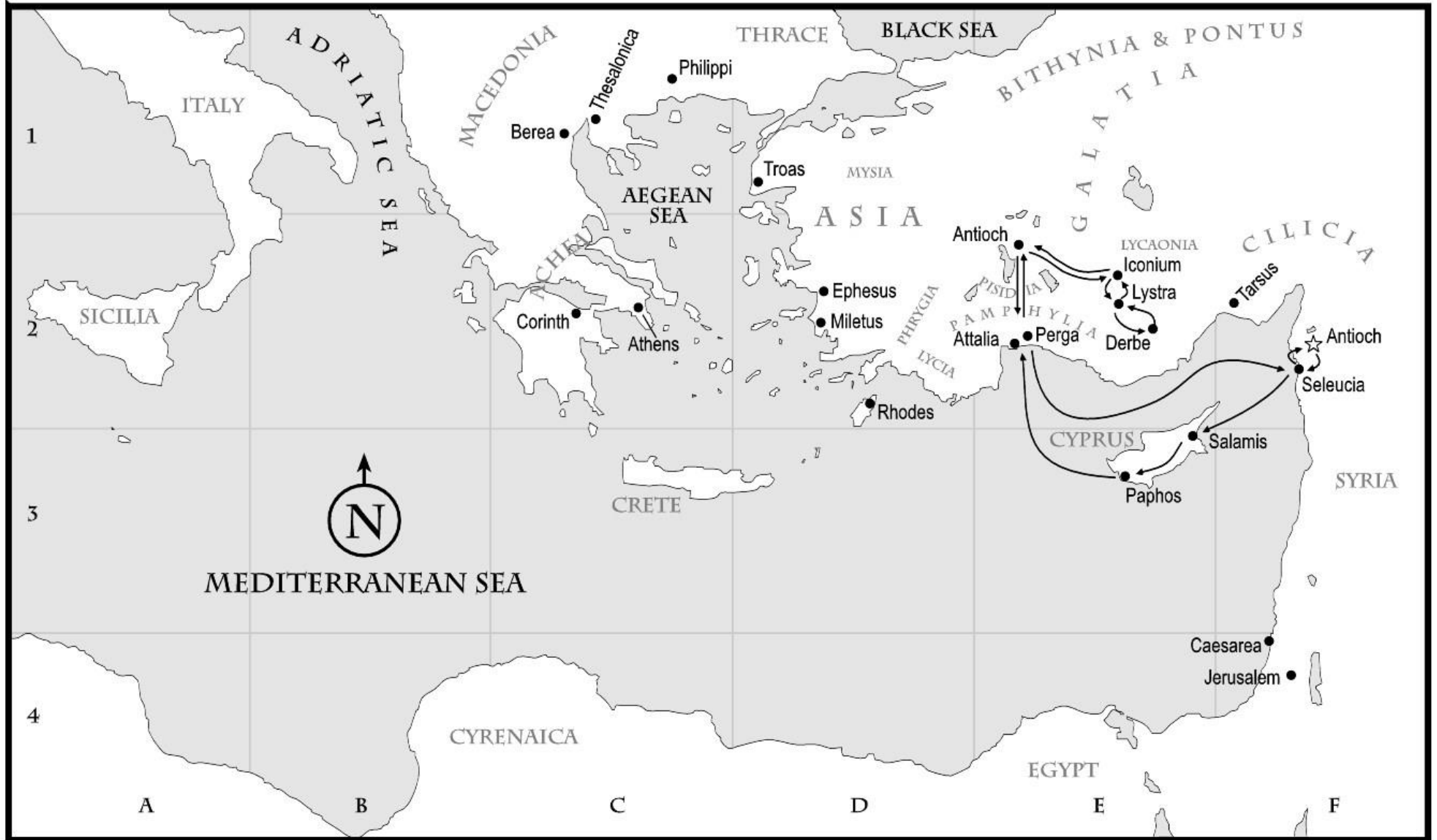
A Reconstruction of Paul's ministry following his release and before his second imprisonment

Coalescing all of the data, including small pieces not cited above (including the apocryphal *Peter's Acts*), the following post-Acts history is suggested for Paul.

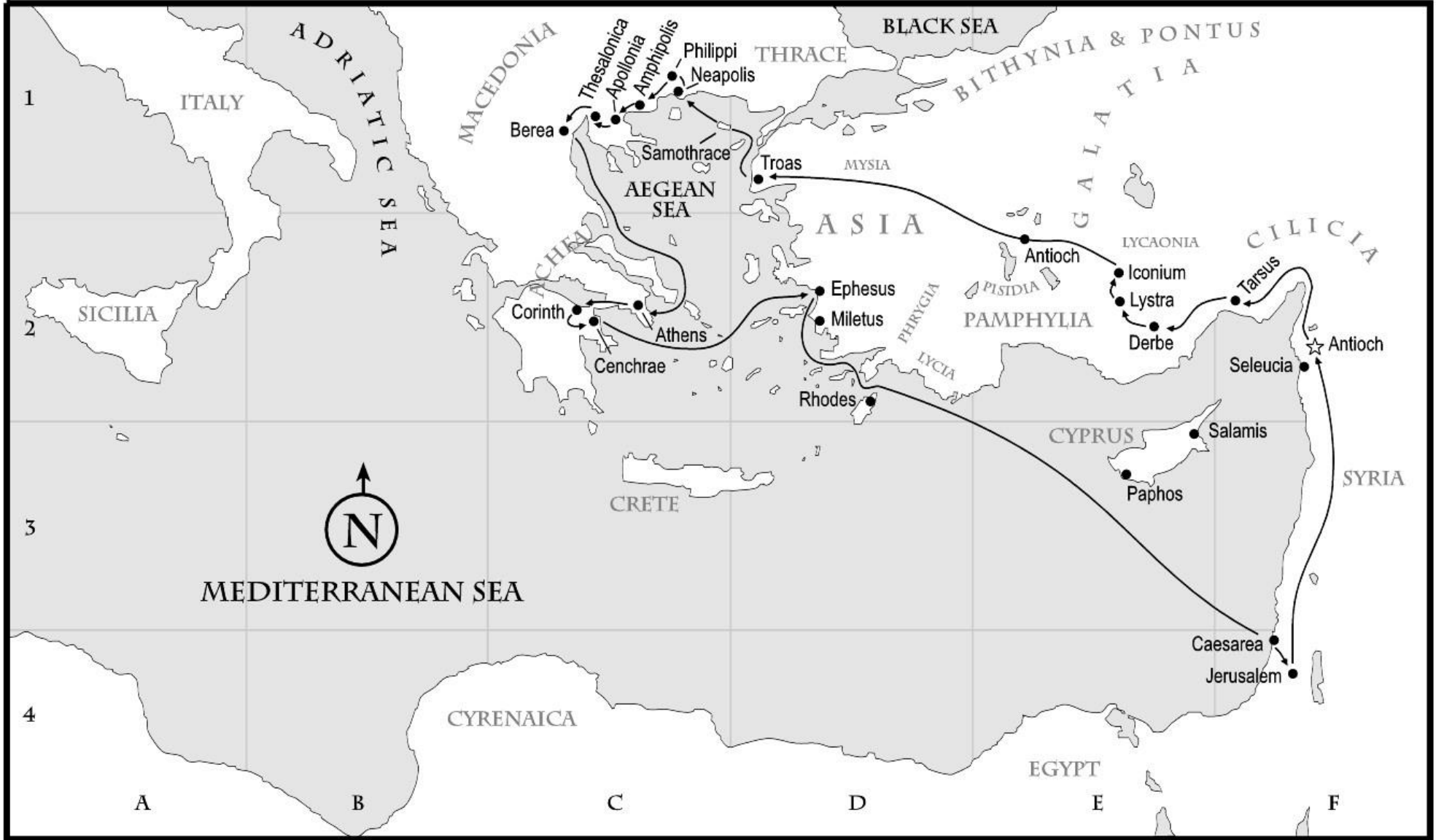
After his release from prison, Paul, accompanied by Christians from Rome, traveled down the Tiber to the port of Ostia, from whence he departed for Spain. He would have passed Genoa and Marseilles to the east coast of Spain, near the mouth of the Ebro River. There is no record, valid or apocryphal, concerning what portion of Spain he evangelized.

- After a year, he left Spain and visited Crete, accompanied by Titus.
- He then probably went to Ephesus and thence into the interior of Asia, visiting congregations in the Lycus Valley. When he returned to Ephesus, he asked Timothy to remain to handle some propagators of foreign doctrines that were infecting the church.
- Paul proceeded north to Macedonia (via Troas), visiting Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. While there he received letters from both Timothy and Titus describing difficulties that they were encountering. Paul wrote I Timothy and Titus at this time.
- He remained in Macedonia for a period, then traveled to Troas, where he lodged with Carpus, and left behind his cloak and parchments. It was here that the coppersmith, Alexander, did him much evil (II Timothy 4:14).
- From Troas he went to Ephesus, where he met Timothy and bid him a tearful farewell (II Timothy 1:4).
- Trophimus accompanied him from Ephesus to Miletus, but Trophimus became sick and had to be left behind.
- Paul crossed directly to Corinth, where Erastus, who had traveled with him from Ephesus, remained.
- Paul then headed northwest to Nicopolis, where he wintered. Titus probably joined him there.
- In the spring he returned to Rome where he was arrested. Nero's worst times had begun and so Paul was placed in strict confinement. From his prison cell, he wrote the final epistle to Timothy.
- Sadly, Paul's last days are clouded in great darkness. The only thing known for certain is that he was beheaded by Nero, simultaneously with Peter's crucifixion, or shortly thereafter.

First Missionary Journey



Second Missionary Journey



Paul's Journey to Rome

