A Commentary on
The Acts of the Apostles

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to my wonderful parents, Inez and Walker Hisle, who have encouraged and helped me all along the Way; to my delightful daughters, Deborah and Jody; and to the love of my life, my wife Darlene.

Joe J Hisle
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Introduction

The Acts of the Apostles is an on-going commentary of the preaching of the gospel in the first century. From the beginning on Pentecost through the missionary journeys of Paul, the book chronicles a monumental effort to spread the “faith” in Jesus Christ and to expose “the way” to the whole world. This task is accomplished by a handful of zealous men who labored with the burning knowledge that “Jesus is the Lord.”

This book records the successes and failures of the infant church, a church cast into a world of religious prejudice, hypocrisy, hopelessness, and corruption. Acts answers the age-old question, “what must I do to be saved,” with a call for obedience to the gospel plan. In a world filled with idolatry, unholiness, and gross immorality, this book persuades men to live soberly, righteously, and godly.

The treachery of scheming men, their hypocrisy, lies, and deceit are exposed and often dealt with severely in the book of Acts. The endless vigilance against the enemies of Christianity is revealed. The need for discipline and the beneficial results of invoking necessary discipline are made plain.
The book of Acts should bring rejoicing to the hearts of all men but especially to those who would have been classified as “Gentiles.” The Gentiles, who for so long have “begged for the crumbs” that fell from the Jewish table, now are invited to sit at the “the King’s table!” Finally, the promise of “salvation by grace” as made to Abraham is a reality, and the grace of God is no longer reserved for the Jews. We may now perceive, even as did the Apostle Peter, “God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Acts 10:34-35).

This book describes the bringing of men’s souls out of darkness into the “marvelous light of Jesus Christ.” It signals the throwing off of the shackles of bondage of the Old Testament and the giving of freedom that comes from being “in Christ.” The book of Acts holds out to lost men the hope of heaven.

Authorship


We understand that Luke writes by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, but the undeniable style of Dr. Luke shows through. In short, precise sentences, he describes amazing events in a characteristic unembellished, matter-of-fact tone. We can only guess how many volumes would have been required if this task would have been undertaken by some of our modern journalists. Luke’s comments are often spiced with precise medical terms that reveal the former profession of the writer.
There is some speculation about the time that Acts is written. This speculation ranges from A.D. 50 to the ridiculous A.D. 135. It really is not too difficult at least to narrow down this time frame. It is evident Luke writes the book before A.D. 70. The following clues help to establish an approximate time: Luke mentions Felix, Festus, and Agrippa. The lives of these men cover the time from about A.D. 50 through the year A.D. 62. The city of Jerusalem is destroyed in 70 A.D., and yet there is not a single word in the entire book that mentions this event. The imprisonment of Paul at Rome is during the reign of Nero (A.D. 54-68), and it is generally agreed Paul is executed in A.D. 63 or 64. Our conclusion is The Acts of the Apostles is written sometime shortly after the end of Paul's captivity in Rome, perhaps late in A.D. 63 or early in A.D. 64. The reader must understand there is much speculation and discussion as to exact dates; but, except from a purely academic standpoint, there is no real reason to be concerned.

Theme of the Book of Acts

Acts reveals many truths in God's plan for mankind, but most of these revelations are tangents to the central theme of the book. Acts is the book of conversions. The gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John “are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name,” (John 20:31). After one comes to believe in Jesus, the burning question arises, “What must I do?” The answer is provided in this book of conversions:
1. The three thousand on the day of Pentecost (2:6-41).
2. The Samaritans (8:12).
3. Simon the Sorcerer (8:13).
4. The Ethiopian Eunuch (8:38).
7. Lydia, the seller of purple (16:14-15).
8. The Philippian jailor (16:33).
9. Dionysius and Damaris (17:34).
10. Crispus and the Corinthians (18:8).
11. Multitudes at such cities as: Jerusalem, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, Antioch, Athens, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Troas, Tyre, Caesarea, Ephesus, Colosse, Rome, etc.

**Purpose of the Author**

It is with earnest expectations to learn that we enter into the study of The Acts of the Apostles. It is our desire that this commentary may be of some benefit to the concerned student of God’s word. It is hoped we all will be inspired by the courage of the fledgling church of the first century in her struggle to preach Jesus--that in some way we might become better acquainted with our heroic brethren who left us a divine legacy of success against tremendous opposition. It was a genuine pleasure for this writer to walk the dusty roads and to sail the tempestuous seas with my brothers: Paul, Peter, Luke, Timothy, Philip, Barnabas, Silas, and a host of others who burned with the knowledge “Jesus is Lord.” May we be encouraged to carry the gospel message to the “whole world,” even those unlikely places, as did our forefathers. Above all, may we be encouraged to continue the “good fight, to finish the course, and to keep the faith.”
Chapter 1

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

The former treatise have I made: Luke begins his narrative by referring to his "former treatise" or literally to his first book, the Gospel of Luke. According to W. E. Vine, the word "treatise" is taken from the Greek word *logos*, meaning a "written narrative" (Vol. IV 152).

O Theophilus: It is not certain as to whom "Theophilus" is, but this is the second time Luke refers to him. In the Gospel of Luke, he is mentioned in chapter one verse 3 as "most excellent Theophilus." Albert Barnes makes this comment:

It is probable that he was some distinguished Roman or Greek, who had been converted; who was a friend of Luke; and who had requested an account of these things (Barnes 181).

of all that Jesus began both to do and teach: Luke declares himself an eyewitness to the events and teachings of Jesus both in his "former treatise" and in the account to follow. It is significant that he mentions "do and teach." Jesus not only taught the type of conduct pleasing to God, but He was a living example for us.
2 Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen:

**Until the day in which he was taken up**: Luke has been a witness of the life of Jesus on earth. In the early chapters of Luke, he records the birth and earliest life of Jesus; in Acts he records the return of Jesus to heaven. The events necessary for the establishment of Christianity are in place. Jesus has been born, has died, has been buried, and has risen again to become the Savior of mankind. What is about to unfold in Luke's narrative impacts the world to such an extent that it will never be the same again.

**after that he through the Holy Ghost**: Jesus carries out His mission on earth with the assistance of God's Holy Spirit. John records, "... for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him" (John 3:34) (see also Acts 10:38; Luke 4:1).

**had given commandments unto the apostles**: Before the ascension of Jesus, He gives them several commands. For example, they are commanded to "...tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49).

They also receive the command:

> Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: (Matthew 28:19).

**whom he had chosen**: For the account of the choosing of the apostles, see Matthew 10:2-4; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:13-16.
3 To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:

To whom also he shewed himself alive: In addition to the commands Jesus leaves the apostles, it is of marked importance that they be witnesses of his resurrection. These same apostles have seen Jesus nailed to the cross, to die apparently like any ordinary man, but Jesus is no ordinary man. Just as He has promised, He arises from the grave victorious over death, thus laying the basis for the good news soon to be preached to man.

after his passion: The Greek word pascho is here rendered "passion." Henry Thayer translates the word to mean "to suffer, to undergo evils, to be afflicted" (494-1-3958).

by many infallible proofs: The word rendered "infallible proofs" does not appear anywhere else in the New Testament. The meaning is "a sure sign, a positive proof" (Vine, Vol. II 220). This truth concerning the indisputable resurrection of Jesus is confirmed by "infallible proofs," such as the fact that Jesus eats with the apostles, talks with them, allows them to touch Him, and works miracles in their midst (John 20:27-28; 21:5-15). There is no doubt in the apostles' minds that Jesus was resurrected from the dead. They are now to affirm this truth to the whole world.

being seen of them forty days: This is the only record of the time interval between the resurrection and the ascension.
and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: In His last days on earth, Jesus has one theme in His teaching: the coming kingdom of God, its organization, and its goal to save the lost. The terms "kingdom of God" and "kingdom of heaven" are used many times in the New Testament. For all practical purposes, there is no distinction in meaning between the terms, which are often used to refer to the Lord's church (Matthew 16:18-19).

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

Luke here makes reference to the earlier gathering of the apostles with Jesus when He leaves His last instructions (Luke 24:36-49).

commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem: Isaiah prophesies, "... for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (2:3). Jesus says, "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47). Christianity is to have its beginning at Jerusalem.

but wait for the promise of the Father: This "promise of the Father" is the baptism of the Holy Spirit as is promised in Luke 3:16 and as related in the next verse.

which, saith he, ye have heard of me: Jesus on various occasions has repeated the "promise of the Father" to His apostles (Luke 12:11-12; John 14:16-26; 15:26; 16:7-13).
5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

Here is an amazing contrast that must have borne on the apostles' minds. Some, if not all, of the apostles have been disciples of John. They have experienced the baptism of water. Now they are to receive the "promise of the Father," baptism in the Holy Spirit. The one is an immersion in water; the second is an immersion in God's Holy Spirit.

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

When they therefore were come together: This is a gathering of the apostles with Jesus during the forty days before the ascension.

ey asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel: This must have been a discouraging question to Jesus. The apostles have heard the teaching of Jesus concerning the coming kingdom for about three years, yet this question makes it obvious they do not understand the nature of the Lord's kingdom. They are still expecting Israel to be returned to its former state. This question also indicates the apostles need "the promise of the Father," the guidance of the Holy Spirit, if they are to preach the gospel of the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

It should also be pointed out that the kingdom has not yet come; it is still in prospect. There are those who would argue that Christ's kingdom had already been established, but this is a conclusion as erroneous as the one made by the apostles.
Nothing, indeed, but a misconception almost as gross as that of the twelve concerning
the nature of the kingdom could have originated the thought entertained by some in
modern times, that Christ's kingdom had been set up previous to this time. All the
arguments in support of this idea, and all the interpretations of special passages in its
favor, plausible as they may be, are set aside by the one decisive consideration, that
this kingdom could not be inaugurated until the King was crowned in heaven. This
occurred after the ascension, and his first administrative act on earth was that of
sending the Holy Spirit upon the apostles on the next Pentecost (McGarvey, Vol. I 5).

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

And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons: It seems Jesus
overlooks the question concerning the restoration of Israel and responds to their desire to
know if it is "at this time." He allows them to understand that "times and seasons" are not for
them to know now. The only clue they have is "not many days hence."

which the Father hath put in his own power: The Father has the authority to set the time at
"his own" pleasure. Marvin Vincent states in his Word Studies concerning "his own": "Stronger
than the simple possessive pronoun. The adjective means private, personal." As is the case
with all things, the coming events are to happen according to the "personal," "private"
determination and authority of God the Father.
8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

But ye shall: This phrase tells us who is to receive "power." This verse is often used by charismatic preachers to teach that "power" and the "Holy Ghost" are promised to all believers today. This idea is a misapplication of scripture and contrary to what is taught. "Ye" is a pronoun; for it to have value, it must have a noun for which it stands. All we have to do to determine to whom "ye" refers is to review the preceding verses. We find the noun for which "ye" stands in verse 2. The "ye" who "shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you," are the apostles. We do not receive the baptism or the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost today (I Corinthians 13:8-10).

receive power: The "power" that is here promised the apostles is the miraculous ability necessary to establish the Lord's church, to preach the gospel by inspiration, to work signs and wonders to confirm their testimonies, to speak in foreign tongues that they may preach "unto all the world," and to perform a host of other miraculous powers for the furtherance of Christianity in the first century.

after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: Through the Holy Ghost, the apostles are to be equipped for the monumental task of taking the gospel to the whole world.

and ye shall be witnesses unto me: Who could be more qualified to be witnesses of Jesus than His apostles? They have seen His manner of life and His miracles; they have heard His teaching; they have seen His meekness and His sufferings; but, most important of all, they are eyewitnesses to His death, burial, and resurrection. These things, to which they are witnesses, they are to preach to the world.
both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth: Here is the itinerary for the spreading of the gospel. It is to begin in Jerusalem and then to go into "all Judea." Judea is the southern part of Palestine and includes Jerusalem as the capital. The gospel is then taken to Samaria, the northern section of Palestine. This evangelism into Samaria takes place when the severe persecution comes against the church at Jerusalem.

And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles (8:1).

From this beginning the gospel is taken to the "whole world," to "every creature" in less than thirty years. Paul writes:

But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world (Romans 10:18).

This task is accomplished without the aid of radio or television or any other mass communication. These people had no automobiles or jet planes. What they had was a burning desire to preach the good news of Jesus Christ. We need this fire rekindled in our hearts today (see also Romans 1:8; Colossians 1:23).

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

And when he had spoken these things: Jesus concludes His final instructions on earth and is ready to ascend back into heaven.
while they beheld: It is important for the apostles to have a clear record of this event. They are not only witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus: they have seen Him ascend to heaven. The fact that the ascension takes place in full view of the apostles makes them eyewitnesses to His ascension. If Jesus had ascended in secret or at night, the apostles might have been confounded, not knowing what had happened to Him. When they see Him leave as He does, there is no doubt as to where He goes.

But when they saw him leave them in this manner, they could not doubt that he had risen; and when they saw him ascend to heaven, they could not doubt that His work was approved, and that God would carry it onward. This event was exceedingly important. (1) It was a confirmation of the Christian religion. (2) It enabled the apostles to state distinctly where the Lord Jesus was, and at once directed their affections and their thoughts away from the earth, and opened their eyes on the glory of the scheme of religion they were to establish. If their Saviour was in heaven it settled the question about the nature of his kingdom. It was clear that it was not designed to be a temporal kingdom (Barnes 371).

Jesus has finished His personal ministry on this earth. It is now time for Him to "go away" that the "Comforter" might come (John 16:7). This has been the plan of God "before the world began"; Jesus has fulfilled His part; He now returns home to be glorified by His father (John 17:4-5).
he was taken up: Alexander Campbell makes the following comment on this phrase:

"Was taken up", indicating the commencement, not the completion of his ascent. He, it appears from the terminology here employed, gradually and with great dignity, ascended, not as a flash of lightning nor as a meteor passes away, but slowly and with majesty, that they might clearly perceive and be assured of his return to his native heaven (7).

With the words of Jesus still ringing in their ears (Luke 24: 51) and "as they were looking on," Jesus majestically returns to heaven to be crowned "both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36).

and a cloud received him out of their sight: As Jesus rises into the splendor and grandeur of the heavens, He is taken out of their vision by the clouds.

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

And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up: The apostles are spellbound by this event. The ascension of Jesus is being indelibly etched on their memories.

behold, two men stood by them: The apostles are so absorbed by this scene that they fail to notice the appearance of "two men."

in white apparel: These "two men" are clothed in white. This is the usual way heavenly messengers appear to men (John 20:12; Mark 16:5; Luke 24:4).
11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

Which also said, Ye men of Galilee: The angels refer to the fact the apostles are from Galilee.

why stand ye gazing up into heaven?: Perhaps this is a slight rebuke to the apostles. The angels, realizing the great work before these men, seem to feel the urgency to get started.

this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner: Here is the assurance that "this same Jesus" will return "in like manner." Some glorious day Jesus will return "in the clouds of heaven" (Matthew 26:64).

as ye have seen him go into heaven: This verse is an affirmation of the fact that the apostles have been eyewitnesses to an event that is to be a key factor in the preaching of the gospel. It is essential that they can testify to the resurrection and ascension of Jesus. This is to be one of the facts in Peter's sermon on Pentecost (2:32-34). Note the emphasis in verse 9, "while they beheld... out of their sight"; verse 10, "they looked stedfastly"; verse 11, "gazing up into heaven... as ye have seen." There is to be no doubt in the apostles' minds as to the ascension of Jesus back to heaven.
Chapter 1

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

Then returned they unto Jerusalem: The apostles return to Jerusalem as they have been instructed, "...tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem" (Luke 24:49). Luke also says, "they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy" (Luke 24:52).

from the mount called Olivet: Mount Olivet is usually referred to as "the Mount of Olives." This is an historical location mentioned many times in both the Old and the New Testaments. As to location, Zechariah says, "... the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east" (14:4). Mark records, "... they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives" (11:1).

which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey:

A Sabbath-day's journey, according to Jewish tradition, was about three-quarters of a mile. It was the supposed distance between the camp and the tabernacle in the wilderness (Joshua 3:4) (Vincent 444).

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

After the ascension the apostles return to Jerusalem to an "upper room." Concerning the "upper room Vincent says:
With the article, denoting some well-known place of resort. It was the name given to the room directly under the flat roof. Such rooms were often set apart as halls for meetings (444).

In this verse Luke gives the names of the remaining eleven apostles. This is the fourth such list in the scriptures (see also Matthew 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:14-16).

This fresh enumeration of the eleven very appropriately finds place here, because it shows that all of those to whom the commission was given were at their post, ready to begin their appointed work, and waiting only for the promised power from on high (McGarvey, Vol. I 10).

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

These all: These words refer to the eleven apostles.

continued with one accord: There is a harmony and oneness among the disciples noted here as they wait in high expectation of the events that are soon to follow. The word "continued" allows us to understand their perseverance. Vincent defines the word “continued” as follows: “the verb is from kartero, strong, stanch, and means originally to persist obstinately in” (444).

in prayer and supplication: The disciples spend their time in persistent prayers that nothing will hinder the ”promise of my Father” that will bring ”power” to the apostles ”not many days hence” (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:5).
with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren: These are other disciples of Jesus besides the apostles.

the women: These are the "women that followed Him from Galilee" (Luke 23:49).

Mary the mother of Jesus: Mary is mentioned here for the last time in the New Testament. It may be noted that Luke speaks of her with respect as "the mother of Jesus," but he gives her no special reverence or adoration as the apostate church will do later in history.

his brethren: This is a reference to the literal half-brothers of Jesus, who were born to Mary after the birth of Jesus. At one time these brothers did not believe in Jesus, but by now they have become faithful followers (John 7:5). The names of the brothers of Jesus--James, Joses, Simon, and Judas (Matthew 13:55)--are the same as the names of some of the apostles; but none of His brothers was an apostle.

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

And in those days: These are the days between the ascension of Jesus and the day of Pentecost.

Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said: The Apostle Peter, as is customary since he is the outspoken one of the apostles, reminds the brethren of the prophecies concerning Judas. There are those who suggest Peter is the oldest of the apostles; therefore, he takes the lead.
(the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,): It should not be understood that this number indicates the total number of the disciples of Jesus but rather those in Jerusalem. The Apostle Paul records, "After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once..." (1 Corinthians 15:6).

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

Men and brethren: Literally, Luke is saying men, brothers or brother-men. This expression is more dignified and solemn than the simple word brethren (Vincent 445).

this scripture must needs have been fulfilled: This is a reference to Psalm 69 and Psalm 109, both of which will be discussed by Peter in verse 20.

which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas: This passage declares David spoke by direction of the Holy Ghost, thus verifying the "... holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21).

which was guide to them that took Jesus: Judas bears forever the infamous epitaph as "guide to them that took Jesus" (Matthew 26:47; John 18:3).
17 For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry.

Judas was chosen as an apostle by Jesus just as were the other apostles (Luke 6:16). He had the opportunity to go down in the annals of sacred history as one of a select few to hold this office; yet, because of his wicked character, he is known as "the traitor." Some might ask why Jesus chose such a character for an apostle? Albert Barnes makes the following suggestion:

If it be asked why he chose such a man to be an apostle -- why he was made the treasurer of the apostles, and was admitted to the fullest confidence -- we may reply, that a most important object was gained in having such a man -- a spy -- among them. It might be pretended when the apostles bore testimony to the purity of life, of doctrine, and of purpose, of the Lord Jesus, that they were interested and partial friends; that they might be disposed to suppress some of his real sentiments, and represent him in a light more favourable than the truth. Hence the testimony of such a man as Judas, if favourable, must be invaluable. It would be free from the charge of partiality. If Judas knew anything unfavourable to the character of Jesus, he would have communicated it to the Sanhedrin. If he knew of any secret plot against the government, or seditious purpose, he had every inducement to declare it. He had every opportunity to know it: he was with him; heard him converse; was a member of his family, and admitted to terms of familiarity. Yet even Judas could not be bought, or bribed, to testify against the moral character of the Saviour (373).

Even a person of the character of Judas admits he has betrayed the "innocent blood" (Matthew 27:4).
18 Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.

Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity: When Judas realizes what he has done, he takes the thirty pieces of silver he has received for betraying Jesus and casts them at the feet of the chief priests. They, realizing this "blood money" cannot be returned to the treasury, purchase "the potter’s field, to bury strangers in" (Matthew 27:5-7).

and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out:
Matthew's account allows us to know that Judas first hangs himself (Matthew 27:5) and then apparently his body hangs unattended until it falls and "burst(s) asunder."

19 And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood.

The deeds of Judas and their consequences are so well known by the general population of Jerusalem that the field once known as "the potter’s field" is now called "the field of blood." "Their proper tongue" is Aramaic, the language spoken in Palestine at that time. The word "Aceldama" is a word composed of two Aramaic words that literally mean "the field of blood."
20 For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take.


These two passages, the former from Psalm 69:25, and the latter from Psalm 109:8, have no specific reference to Judas in their original context. They occur in the midst of curses pronounced, not by David, but, as Peter explicitly states, by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of David (16), concerning wicked men in general who persecute the servants of God. But if it be proper that the habitations of such men in general should be made desolate, and that any office they held should be given to others, it was preeminently so in the case of Judas; and it was proper to say that these words were written of him as one among many (McGarvey, Vol. I 14-15).

Peter thus declares the house of Judas is abandoned and his "bishopric," overseership, will be taken by another (The New Englishman's Greek Concordance and Lexicon 317).

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

The process now begins for the selection of a successor to the apostleship once held by Judas. In this verse Peter asks which of these constant companions of Jesus will be chosen as a replacement for Judas.
And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning (John 15:27).

The candidates must meet specific requirements as will be noticed in the next verse.

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

**Beginning from the baptism of John:** This event marks the beginning of the ministry of Jesus (Matthew 3:13). To be a proper "witness" of Jesus, the candidate needs to have been there in the beginning.

**unto that same day that he was taken up from us:** To be the complete "witness," the candidate for the apostleship must have seen the ascension of Jesus into heaven.

**must one be ordained:** Barnes clarifies the requirement of ordination:

The Greek word usually denoting ordination is not used here. The expression is, literally, "must one be, or become, a witness with us of his resurrection." The expression does not imply that he must be set apart in any particular manner, but simply that one should be designated or appointed for this specific purpose, to be a witness of the resurrection of Christ (375).

**to be a witness:** To qualify for this position as a "witness," one has to be more than a mere observer. Vincent comments: “Witness. One who shall bear testimony: not a spectator” (447).
with us of his resurrection: This candidate, to become the new apostle, must be able to bear witness of the resurrection of Jesus as could the other apostles.

It needs to be noticed that this is the only verse in the scriptures where we have a guideline for the selection of apostles. It was required that the apostles must have seen Jesus after his resurrection. The Apostle Paul, though "one born out of due time," also is a qualified witness (1 Corinthians 9:1; 15:8). It is also obvious that those who profess to be apostles today are lacking in these qualifications.

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

And they appointed two: Of those who qualify, two are selected, or nominated, to be considered for the appointment.

Joseph called Barsabas: The name Barsabas literally means son of Saba.

who was surnamed Justus: Justus is a Latin name, meaning just, more than likely given him because he was known as a man of integrity (Barnes 375).

and Matthias: Very little is known of the family or background of this man. The name Matthias literally means "gift of Jehovah" (The Bible Encyclopedia and Scriptural Dictionary 1128).
24 And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew
whether of these two thou hast chosen,

And they prayed: It is significant to note that the apostles are not presumptuous enough to
attempt such a selection themselves. Rather they realize the authority of God in such matters
and rely on His choice; thus they request His guidance.

and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men: The apostles’ prayer is
addressed to God, the "heart searcher." "I the Lord search the heart…" (Jeremiah 17:10, also I
Chronicles 28:9; Psalm 139:23).

shew whether of these two thou hast chosen: The apostles are aware that the choice of the
new apostle is a decision that God has made. Since God “knows the hearts of all men,” He is
called upon to “show” His choice, which without question will be the right choice. We must
appreciate the confidence and trust of the apostles in the providence of God. They want only
the man whom God has chosen.

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

That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship: The one selected for this office is to
take the place once given to Judas. The word "part" is the same word rendered "lot" in the
next verse. The idea is the new apostle will take "what is obtained by lot, allotted portion"
(Thayer 349-2-2819).
from which Judas by transgression fell: It is obvious Judas, because of his sins, loses not only his apostleship but his life and, worst of all, his eternal soul. Such is the "wages of sin" (Romans 6:23).

that he might go to his own place: The simple way in which this statement is made seems to indicate the apostles are aware of the eternal abode of Judas, as well they should have been. Jesus says concerning Judas:

The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born (Matthew 26:24).

To us, in this day and time, it may seem calloused and uncharitable to say a dead sinner has "gone to his place," but we must face the scriptural facts: dead sinners are going to hell (Revelation 20:15; 21:8; 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9).

The phrase his own place, means the place of abode which is fitted for him, which is his appropriate home. Judas was not in a place which befitted his character when he was an apostle; he was not in such a place in the church; he would not be in heaven. Hell was the only place which was fitted to the man of avarice and of treason. And if this be the true interpretation of this passage, then it follows, (1) that there will be such a thing as future, eternal punishment. One such man there certainly is in hell, and ever will be. If there is one there, for the same reason there may be others. All objections to the doctrine are removed by this single fact; and it cannot be true that all men will be saved. (2) Each individual in eternity will find his own proper place. Hell is not an arbitrary appointment. Every man will go to the place for which his character is fitted. The hypocrite is not fitted for heaven. The man of pride, and avarice, and pollution and falsehood, is not fitted for heaven. The place adapted to such men is hell; and the
design of the judgment will be to assign to each individual his proper abode in the eternal world. (3) The design of the judgment of the great day will be to assign to all the inhabitants of the world their proper place. It would not be fit that the holy and pure should dwell for ever in the same place with the unholy and impure; and the Lord Jesus will come to assign to each his appropriate eternal habitation (Barnes 376).

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

And they gave forth their lots: The casting of lots is not a voting process as some suggest. This system is a means of making decisions under the direction of God. The Jews often used the process of "casting lots" to make decisions. The land of Canaan was divided by lot (Numbers 26:55). David divided the priests by lot (1 Chronicles 24:5). The guilt of Achan was determined by lot (Joshua 7:16-18). Thus, it is natural that the apostles would use this method to make this important decision. It must be remembered the decision remains with God; the apostles are asking "show whether of these two thou has chosen." “The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord” (Proverbs 16:33).

and the lot fell upon Matthias: The method of "casting lots" varies, but it basically involves writing the names of the choices upon pieces of wood or stone and placing them in a vase. The vase is shaken, and the first name to be poured out is the choice. It is from this concept that we get the saying, "it fell his lot." In this case the "lot fell upon Matthias." Through this process, God makes known "whom he had chosen" to take the place of Judas.
and he was numbered with the eleven apostles: By the casting of the lot, Matthias becomes an apostle. We have no further record of the life of Matthias in the New Testament. Neither the place he worked, his successes or failures, nor his death are documented in the Word of God. Matthias is now a member of a very special group, which will become the driving force necessary to establish the Lord's church. With "one accord" they are now waiting in anticipation of the coming "power from on high." Little do these twelve men know what lies before them in this monumental task. When the last apostle died, in service to his Lord, the special office of apostle ceased.
Chapter 2

The following chapter contains the information that is literally the pivotal point for the advancement of Christianity. The promised coming of the Holy Spirit in a baptismal measure, the preaching of the gospel, the conversion of the 3000, and the establishment of the Lord's church are all found in this dramatic chapter. This chapter marks the beginning of a monumental effort to convert the whole world.

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

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come: The feast of Pentecost is known in the Old Testament as the "feast of weeks" (Exodus 34:22) or the "feast of harvest" (Exodus 23:16). This feast became known in New Testament times simply as the "feast of Pentecost" because the feast was observed fifty days after the first sabbath following the "feast of the passover" (Leviticus 23:15-16). The word "Pentecost" literally means "fiftieth" (The New Analytical Greek Lexicon 319). This calculation sounds complicated, but really it is not. To determine "Pentecost," one begins to count on the "morrow after the sabbath" and counts until "seven sabbaths be complete: even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days" (Leviticus 23:15-16). The sabbath under consideration is the weekly sabbath or the seventh day (Saturday). The count begins on the "morrow" (day) after the "sabbath" and goes fifty days, even to the "morrow after the seventh sabbath." The morrow after the "sabbath," is the first day or Sunday. Thus, the "day of Pentecost" comes on the "first day of the week" or the day we call Sunday.
McGarvey makes the following comment:

The day of Pentecost was the fiftieth day after the sabbath of the passover week; and as the count commenced on the day after the sabbath, it also ended on the same day of the week, or our Sunday. The commentators in general, misled by Josephus, represent the fifty days as being counted from "the second day of unleavened bread, which is the sixteenth day of the month" (Ant.iii.10.5). If this were correct the first of the fifty, and consequently the last, might fall on any day of the week. But the enacting clause in the law reads as follows: "And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall there be complete; even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meal offering unto the Lord" (Lev. xxiii. 15,16). This language is not easily misunderstood; for if even in the first clause, the words "from the morrow after the sabbath" could be construed as meaning from the morrow after the first day of unleavened bread, the latter part of the sentence precludes such a construction; for the count was to be "unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath," and the word sabbath here unquestionably means a weekly sabbath; and if the fiftieth day was the morrow after the weekly sabbath, then the first must also have been the morrow after the weekly sabbath. That it was is further proved by the terms of the law, fixing the day of offering the sheaf or the wave offering: "And he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it" (Lev. xxii.11) (19-20).

A more opportune day could not have been chosen for the establishment of the Lord's church. On the feast of Pentecost, there are probably more Jews in Jerusalem than at any other time. This day, being the first day of the week, is the day Jesus is resurrected from the grave (Mark 16:90). All things are now ready for the coming "kingdom of heaven."
they were all with one accord: It is important to determine who "they" are because these are the ones who will receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit." There are at least three different ideas as to who "they" might be. Some would say "they," who receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, include the apostles, the 120 disciples, plus several thousand Jews who become involved in this event. Others tell us "they" are the apostles plus the 120 disciples who are waiting in the upper room. Neither of these ideas is correct. To determine who "they" are, all one must do is to back up to the last verse of chapter one and read through the first verse of chapter two.

And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon MATTHIAS; and he was numbered with the ELEVEN APOSTLES. And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, THEY were all with one accord in one place (emphasis mine-J H).

From this reading it is plain to see that "they" refers to Matthias, the new apostle, and the eleven original apostles. After all, the apostles are the ones to whom the Holy Spirit is promised. It should also be remembered the original manuscript is not divided into chapters and verses; therefore, there would have been no confusion to early readers of Luke’s account (see notes on 1:8.)

in one place: It cannot be determined for certain where the disciples are gathered. Most likely they are in a room in or near the temple.
2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

And suddenly there came a sound from heaven: The apostles have been waiting for the fulfillment of the "promise of my Father" and now, with a blast of noise from heaven, the promise is fulfilled: the Holy Spirit falls upon them.

as of a rushing mighty wind: There is no indication there is a "rushing mighty wind," rather the "sound" is like a "rushing mighty wind." Perhaps the sound is like the roar of a tornado or the noise associated with a violent wind.

and it filled all the house where they were sitting: The sound is heard throughout the house where the apostles are gathered.

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

And there appeared unto them: We must remember these events are happening to the apostles. They have heard the noise, now they see "cloven tongues like as of fire."

cloven tongues: The word "cloven," as used here, does not indicate the idea of forked, as one might usually think, but rather "to divide into parts and distribute" (The New Analytical Greek Lexicon 94). The "tongues" divide into parts and distribute themselves among the apostles.

like as of fire: These "tongues" are not actual fire but have the appearance of brilliant "tongues" of fire.
and it sat upon each of them: This visible manifestation of the coming of the Holy Spirit rests upon each of the apostles.

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

And they: "They" indicates the apostles.

were all filled with the Holy Ghost: The apostles have now experienced the sound of the "rushing mighty wind." They have seen the "tongues as of fire." They are now immersed in the influence and power of the Holy Spirit. This experience is the "baptism" of the Holy Spirit as Jesus promises them in chapter one verse 5. To be "filled with the Holy Ghost" indicates the apostles are "filled mentally, or under the full influence" of the Holy Spirit (Analytical Greek Lexicon 332). The promise of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and of power is now fulfilled. The apostles are now divinely empowered to preach the good news of Jesus Christ to "all nations."

and began to speak with other tongues: The initial sign of this divine "power" is the ability to speak in "other tongues." "Other tongues" are languages "strictly different from their native tongues ..." (Vincent 449). There are those today who claim they have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the ability to speak in "tongues." These "modern tongues" are not even akin to the "tongues" of the Bible. It must be remembered the "other tongues" of our text and the "unknown tongues" of 1 Corinthians 14 are always referring to foreign languages. To illustrate, if I begin to speak in Russian, a language I do not know, it would be for me an "other tongue." I would suspect, for the majority of the readers, it would be an "unknown tongue" because they would not understand what I said. Our modern day "tongue" speakers rattle around in a nervous gibberish that has no interpretation whatsoever. When confronted with
their scriptural inconsistencies, they will claim they are speaking in the "tongues of angels" or a "heavenly language!"

**as the Spirit gave them utterance:** The Holy Spirit gives the apostles this ability to speak in foreign languages. Literally, the "promise" is fulfilled at this point. Jesus says, "For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you" (Matthew 10:20). The miraculous ability to speak in "tongues" is necessary for a group of uneducated apostles to preach to "all nations." When the gospel is completely revealed and written down, "that which was perfect had come;" the need for the miraculous ability to speak in foreign languages "ceased" (1 Corinthians 13:8). This task had been accomplished by the close of the first century.

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

**And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews:** At this time, because of the feast of Pentecost, there is a large number of Jews gathered in Jerusalem.

devout men: As might be expected, those who would make the effort to gather for this feast are pious, religious men. It is these prudent, circumspect men of the Old Testament who will have the first opportunity to hear the gospel of Christ.

out of every nation under heaven: The Jewish nation is widely scattered throughout the world at this time; but, because of this great feast, many have made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Jews are present from "every nation under heaven."
6 Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.

Now when this was noised abroad: The news of the coming of the Holy Spirit to the apostles spreads quickly among the Jews.

The multitude came together: These Jews from "every nation under the sun" are now gathered in one huge audience. The stage is set for the initial preaching of the gospel of Christ.

and were confounded: The news of the events surrounding the coming of the Holy Spirit causes the Jews to become agitated or stirred up. They are in a state of confusion as to the meaning of what has transpired.

because that every man heard them speak in his own language: As we will find out in the next verse, one of the specific reasons for the Jews' being "confounded" is that they hear these uneducated, Galilaean men speak to them in their own language. The word used here for "language" is also translated "dialect" or "tongue" (Vine, Vol. II 309).

For some there is a question as to whether the miracle was in the hearing or in the speaking. It must be remembered the apostles are the ones empowered to perform wonders; therefore, the miracle is in the speaking. Peter does not speak in some "generic" language that everyone hears in his own language. Evidently all of the apostles are speaking as the multitude hears "them speak" in their own tongues.
7 And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all those which speak Galilaeans?

And they were all amazed and marvelled: By using two different Greek words to describe the consternation of this group of Jews, the divinely inspired writer allows us to see the thought process of these people. The word “amazed” describes their initial surprise at the events, while "marvelled" indicates their continuing to think on what has happened. Vincent says the “latter word, ‘marvelled’ denotes the continuing wonder, meaning to regard with amazement and with a suggestion of beginning to speculate on the matter” (450).

saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans: The Jews in this assembly realize the apostles are from Galilee; thus, they are Galilaeans, who are blamed for neglecting the study of their language and charged with errors in grammar and ridiculous mispronunciations (Vincent 450). The Apostle Peter is recognized as a "Galilaean" because of his language (Mark 14:70). Now, to the marvel and amazement of these Jews, these "Galilaeans" speak fluently in many different languages. We also would make this note: it further speaks to the power and glory of God that the glorious gospel will be entrusted into the hands of men who are not known for education or eloquence. The Apostle Paul says, "we have this power in earthen vessels" (2 Corinthians 4:7). May we never forget the power is in the message, not the messenger.

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

These Jews are from "every nation under the sun," so by necessity they speak many different languages and dialects. To their great surprise, they hear "Galilaeans" speak to them in their own native language. The word "tongue," as mentioned earlier, means language.
9 Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia,

The countries represented by these Jews are enumerated in geographical order, beginning in the far east and proceeding to the west. These different geographical areas embrace many different dialects and languages.

Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites: These countries represent parts of the Persian empire. These people live east beyond the Tigris River.

and the dwellers in Mesopotamia: Mesopotamia is a Greek word meaning between the rivers (Barnes 379). This region lies between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. Hundreds of Jews had been taken there during the Babylonian captivity.

and in Judaea: The writer, by necessity, mentions the country of Judaea since these nations are represented as "every nation under the sun."

and Cappadocia: This country is located in the southeast portion of the area now referred to as Asia Minor.

in Pontus: Pontus is in the northeast portion of Asia Minor bordering the Black Sea.

and Asia: The term "Asia" is used to describe the areas not specifically mentioned. It may also be noted that this area is known as the Middle East today.
10 Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes,

Phrygia, and Pamphylia: These two provinces are also a part of Asia Minor.

in Egypt: Egypt is an extensive and once powerful country in north Africa, bounded on the north by the Mediterranean Sea. Large numbers of Jews live in Egypt. Two-fifths of the population of Alexandria is said to have been Jews (Vincent 451). It is here that the first translation of the Old Testament into Greek is made. This translation is called the Septuagint.

and in the parts of Libya: Libya is a name given to the area west of Egypt. The Greeks often refer to all of Africa as Libya.

about Cyrene: Cyrene is a region that lies about 500 miles west of Alexandria, Egypt.

and strangers of Rome: These "strangers of Rome" are Roman citizens who live in and about Jerusalem for business purposes.

Jews: These are Roman citizens, born of Jewish parents.

and proselytes: This reference is to Roman citizens dwelling at Jerusalem, having been converted to the Jewish religion.

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

Cretes: Jews from Crete, an island in the Mediterranean Sea, are gathered in Jerusalem for the celebration of Pentecost.
and Arabians: Arabia is the large peninsula of land bounded on the west by the Red Sea, on the south by the Indian Ocean, on the east by the Euphrates River, and on the north by Syria.

we do hear them speak in our tongues: In spite of the many different languages and dialects represented at this gathering, each hears his own "tongue" (language) spoken. Judging by the number of countries represented, there are at least seven different languages spoken and numerous dialects of those languages.

the wonderful works of God: The apostles declare the great and mighty things that God has done.

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

And they were all amazed: The events just witnessed by these Jews have truly been amazing to them. Actually, they are unsure as to the meaning of what they have seen and heard.

and were in doubt: The people are confounded. This expression denotes the hesitancy with which the crowd accepts what they are seeing. The Revised Standard Version renders the word "doubt" as "perplexed."

saying one to another: They begin to ask among themselves for an explanation.

What meaneth this: The question on everyone's lips is "What do these events signify?" The Jews must feel they have witnessed an omen of things to come. They want an explanation.
13 Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.

Others mocking said: As is often the case, when humans are confronted with things about which they are ignorant there are those who would dismiss the happenings by ridicule. They accuse the apostles of being drunk. Mockery, derision, sneering, and scoffing are tools of the devil used to profane holy things. These tools are often used to deter otherwise good men from believing and obeying the truth.

These men are full of new wine: The accusation is that the apostles are drunk on "new wine." The Greek word, “Gleukos denotes sweet ‘new wine,’ or must; the accusation shows it is intoxicating and must have been undergoing fermentation for some time” (Vine Vol. IV 219).

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

But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them: The Apostle Peter, spokesman for the eleven other apostles and holder of the "keys to the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 16:19), stands up to deliver a sermon that is literally to change the course of the world. For the first time in all of history, the glorious gospel of Christ is to be declared to the world. The plan, conceived in the mind of God before the foundation of the world, is to be made public. Men will be told of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ; and they will be given instruction on the salvation of their souls.
The expression "keys to the kingdom of heaven" means the gospel of Christ. The gospel is the means of entering into the kingdom. Peter uses the "keys" first for the Jews here in Acts 2. Later he is called upon to use the "keys" to open the kingdom to the Gentiles in Acts 10. What a great privilege it was to be the first to preach the gospel of Christ to both Jews and Gentiles.

Ye men of Judaea, and all that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: Peter, in a very respectful way, addresses the large assembly of native Judeans as well as the visitors in the city for the Feast of Pentecost. He asks for their attention that the message he has for them may be made known.

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

After the amazing series of events the multitude has witnessed, especially the speaking in tongues, some would dismiss this happening as the result of drunkenness. Peter flatly denies the possibility the apostles are drunk. It is but the "third hour." As the Jews counted time, that is about nine o'clock in the morning. This is the time for the morning prayers for the Jews, certainly not a time to be drunk. Also, Peter may have reasoned that men get drunk at night (1 Thessalonians 5:7), not at nine o'clock in the morning.

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

Peter now proceeds to tell his audience the real cause behind the events that have just transpired. He points these Jews to one of their own prophets, the prophet Joel.
17 And is shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: 

And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God: The prophecy of Joel referred to by Peter is found in Joel 2:28-32. Joel makes the prediction of the events that Peter says are now beginning: "this is that." God through the Prophet Joel declares these things would “come to pass in the last days.” “In the last days” is an expression referring to the Christian dispensation. The day of Pentecost marks the beginning of "the last days." We are living in "the last days"; we are not looking for another dispensation of time (note also Isaiah 2:2, Hebrews 1:2; 1 Peter 1:20).

I will pour out of my Spirit: The Greek word for "pour" (ekcheo) is defined: "to bestow or distribute largely ... the abundant bestowal of the Holy Spirit" (Thayer 201-1- 1632).

This pouring out of the Holy Spirit by God upon "all flesh" is indicative of the beginning of the miraculous age of the Lord's church. This age of miracles is necessary for the confirmation of God’s word with signs and wonders; for the inspiration necessary to preach while the gospel is being revealed; and, in general, for the establishment and sustaining of Christianity. This period of miracles is to last until "that which is perfect is come" (1 Corinthians 13:10). This passage indicates that when the New Testament, "the perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25), was completely revealed and written down, the need for miracles would "vanish away" (1 Corinthians 13:8).
upon all flesh: This concept of "all flesh" must be restricted. We are not to take the idea of "all flesh" to mean the Spirit of God is to be poured out on birds or animals (1 Corinthians 15:39). The concept must be restricted to human flesh, but even this interpretation has its limitations. The promise of Joel does not mean the Spirit of God will be "poured out" on wicked, unrepentant men. The Jews of this time recognize only two kinds of human flesh: Jews and Gentiles. The Jews, until now, have been the only ones who have enjoyed a special relationship with God. That arrangement is soon to change. The beginning of Joel's promise starts on Pentecost with the "pouring out of God's Spirit" upon the Jews as represented by the apostles when they are baptized with the Holy Spirit (2:1-4). Later the Spirit will be "poured out" upon the Gentiles, the household of Cornelius, when they also receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit (11:15-17). The apostles and the household of Cornelius are the only ones in Biblical record who receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It now can be seen, from a Biblical perspective, "all flesh" means representatives of both Jews and Gentiles.

and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: Joel now begins to mention other blessings that would come as a result of this pouring out of the Spirit. The term "prophesy" signifies the speaking forth of the mind and counsel of God (Vine, Vol. III 221). To "see visions" and "dream dreams" are references to the ways in which God has revealed Himself to the prophets in times past. The indication is that God intends to continue to reveal His will to man, but now there will be no partiality as to Jew or Gentile, male or female, young or old, bond or free.
18 And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:

The Holy Spirit, who brings these miraculous measures of power, will bless others with miraculous gifts such as the gift of prophecy. The reception of these gifts will be through the "laying on of the apostles' hands" (8:18).

There are three points of interest in this quotation. The first deals with Joel's promise of the outpouring of the Spirit. Joel is emphasizing that the blessings of the gospel age would be for all without any distinction. Under the Jewish age a clear distinction was made between Jew and Gentile, between man and woman, and between slave and free man. Joel, however, said the Spirit would be poured out on all people, that is without distinction between Jew and Gentile. The Spirit also would be poured without distinction of age (old men and young men), and without social distinction (servants). Joel's prophecy contemplated the entire miraculous age of the church, when the apostles conferred miraculous spiritual gifts upon the ones mentioned in this prophecy (Doug Edwards 137-138).

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

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

There is much speculation as to the events thus indicated. Is Joel describing a literal wonder that is to shake heaven and earth, or is this a fearful omen to describe the coming destruction of Jerusalem or even the end of time and the final judgment of men? All of these conclusions have some credibility.
Several of the most spectacular wonders ever seen on earth had occurred right there in Jerusalem the day Jesus was crucified only fifty-three days before Peter thus spoke. The very sun's light failed; and, as it was the full moon, the satellite appeared as blood. Pontius Pilate wrote to the Emperor Tiberius that "The moon, being like blood, did not shine the whole night, and yet she happened to be at the full." Thus the sun and the moon were "wonders in heaven," and the earthquake, the rending of the veil of the temple, and the resurrection of many of the dead, were signs on the earth beneath. ... "The blood and fire and vapor of smoke..." were spectacularly associated with every great Jewish feast, such as Passover or Pentecost. It is difficult for any modern to envision the sacrifice of a quarter of a million lambs and all of the blood and "vapor of smoke" that inevitably accompanied such an event (Coffman 46).

As noted, these "wonders and signs" may also be a grim prediction of the impending destruction of Jerusalem. In the year 70 A.D., the Roman legions would fulfill the judgment of God against Israel by the utter devastation of the Jews' Holy City. In the carnage of Jerusalem, we can see not only the "signs" of Joel but also a prophetic type of the ultimate end of the world itself. Blood suggests the bloodshed that would occur. Fire suggests the burning of the city that could have produced billows of smoke that literally darkened the sun in the middle of the day. Also, the moon as viewed through smoke appears to be blood red. This answer to the prophecy is preferred by this writer, especially in view of the next verse, which allows us to know that there is salvation in the midst of this awful calamity for "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord."
21 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

This verse restores hope. In the midst of turmoil, there can still be found salvation in the Lord. Those Jews who became Christians were spared in the destruction of Jerusalem. Peter’s message not only applies to those Jews who are in immediate danger but to all the human race, from this time, until the end of time itself. The opportunity for salvation will be given to "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord."

**And it shall come to pass:** It is coming to pass literally as the apostle speaks.

**that whosoever:** The opportunity for salvation through Christ Jesus is universal. The call is to "whosoever will" (Revelation 22:17).

**shall call on the name of the Lord:** To "call upon the name of the Lord" involves more than simply saying the Lord's name. Jesus says, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 7:21). He also says, "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say" (Luke 6:46). To "call upon the name of the Lord" includes doing the Lord's commandments (John 14:15; 15:14; 1 John 2:3-5).

**shall be saved:** This passage refers to eternal salvation, not just to salvation from the destruction of Jerusalem.
22 Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:

After this initial opening address, the Apostle Peter now comes to the real theme of his message. He is ready to declare Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah whom the Jews have rejected. Little known to this motley audience of Israel's most righteous or perhaps most self-righteous, they are about to be saddled with the guilt of not only failing to recognize Jesus as the promised Messiah but also bearing the responsibility for the grisly deed of putting Him to death.

Ye men of Israel: Literally, Luke addresses the descendants of Israel or Jacob. As in verse 14, Peter again calls for the attention of his audience, but this time he uses a name that refers to all of the Jews.

hear these words: After describing the prophecy of Joel, Peter now begins the second major point of his discourse in which he describes Jesus as Messiah and tells them how they should have recognized Him. He will conclude his sermon with a declaration of the very essence of the gospel: how Jesus dies, is buried, and rises again.
Jesus of Nazareth: No opportunity is to be missed in identifying Jesus to these Jews. Jesus is known as "a Nazarene" simply because he lived in Nazareth (Matthew 2:23). Jesus asks the Jews, in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth" (John 18:4-5). The Jews are never going to be allowed to forget "Jesus of Nazareth." This name will be declared as the source of power and authority for the miracles and teaching to be done from this day forward. It will be a name that transfixes the multitudes to believe in Him and haunts the rebellious in eternity. This by no means will be the last time these people hear the name Jesus of Nazareth.

a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Peter now begins to spew forth a staccato of undeniable facts about this hated "Nazarene," facts that will literally cut these Jews to the heart. One can almost feel the fervor of Peter as he rises to the task of convincing and convicting these Jews. Some of these very ones are guilty of crucifying Jesus. “In one breath, these Jews are reminded of the wondrous miracles and signs that Jesus wrought among them; they are charged with knowing this is true…” (McGarvey, Vol. I 30). Peter lets them know he will accept no excuses.

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

Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God: The all knowing "wisdom of God ordained before the world" that the salvation of man will come as a result of the sacrifice of Jesus (1 Corinthians 2:7). This statement confirms that when Jesus is delivered by the Jews to the Romans to be crucified, it is according to a definite plan executed by God (John 3:16).
ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Peter explains that some of the Jews in this audience are guilty of the willful death of Jesus:

While the hands that carried out the grisly work of crucifixion were the hands of "lawless men"--that is to say, the Romans, who were outside the range of the law received by Israel --yet the instigators of the act were Jews. It was the chief-priestly leaders of the people who engineered His death; it was the Jerusalem mob, egged on by those leaders, who yelled "Crucify him!" But all who took part, directly or indirectly, in putting Him to death were unconsciously fulfilling "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (Bruce 70).

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

Here is a sharp contrast in what man did to Jesus and what God did for Him. "Wicked men," inspired by the arch-deceiver himself, assume incorrectly that if they can get rid of this troublesome "Nazarene," their problems will be over. In reality, as the nails are being driven into the hands of Jesus, the nails are being driven into Satan's coffin. The Apostle Paul reasons that if the princes of this world would have known of God's great plan for the salvation of men through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, "they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory" (1 Corinthians 2:5-8). When Satan causes Jesus to be put to death, he seals his own fate and by the same act unleashes the "power of God unto salvation" (Revelation 20:10; Romans 1:16). Man crucifies Jesus; God "loosed the pains of death," all "by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." The "mystery" of the ages, the "hidden wisdom" of God, has now been revealed for the eternal benefit of mankind (1 Corinthians 2:7).
25 For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved:

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

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

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

Peter continues his revelation of Jesus as the Christ and Savior by recalling the words of Psalm 16:8-11. Here he skillfully involves members of his audience in his speech by allowing them to fill in the blanks in David's statement. Of whom does David speak? Is David referring to himself or to someone else? Although David speaks in first person, Peter will show that this "Holy One" who will not "see corruption" cannot be David. It is highly improbable that David would have ever considered himself as the "Holy One," especially with the shadow of Uriah and Bathsheba on his conscience. The thrust is to reveal Jesus and no one else as the promised Messiah.

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

Men and brethren: Peter again asks for the careful attention of his audience. He tactfully addresses them as "men and brethren," thus sharing a kinship with them.

let me freely speak unto you: Vincent explains the term “freely speak” as "speaking everything, and therefore without reserve" (454).
of the patriarch David: It is understood by the Jews that through the lineage of David, one would again arise to sit upon David's throne to rule Israel. This promise is given in Psalm 132:11. The Jews have the idea of a literal, earthly kingdom. The fact that the kingdom of Jesus is "not of this world," but rather a spiritual kingdom, becomes a major stumbling block to the Jews.

that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day: Here is the undeniable truth that "David is not the "Holy One" who would not "see corruption," for he is still "dead and buried" even "unto this day." By now, the attention of the Jews should be off David, and they should have been looking for the correct "Holy One" of the Psalm.

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

Therefore being a prophet: David is recognized as a prophet.

and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him: The reference is to Psalm 132:11 as noted in verse 29.

that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh: The promise is that through the fleshly lineage of David, Jesus Christ would come. Over a dozen times in the New Testament, Jesus is referred to as the "son of David" (Matthew 1:1; 12:23; Luke 18:38). For example, Paul says, “Concerning his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh” (Romans 1:3).
he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne: Peter has laid the foundation for the main point of the entire discourse. The Jews should be wondering, "If not David, who? Who is the "Christ" intended to assume the reign of David, in this new kingdom?"

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

He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ: David, speaking by direct inspiration from God, knew the reference was not to himself but to the Christ who was to come.

that his soul was not left in hell: The term "hell" does not refer to the place of eternal torment (Geenna) but rather to the word "Hades" defined by Thayer as "the common receptacle of disembodied spirits" (11-2-86).

neither his flesh did see corruption: The flesh of Jesus is not allowed to decay.

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

Jesus, a descendant of David, now has been raised to be ruler over God's people:

I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations (Psalms 89:3-4).

And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever (2 Samuel 7:12,13).
In spite of this record and the evidence it affords, there are those today still looking for the kingdom of Jesus to come. They are looking in vain! The kingdom of Jesus was established during the lifetime of the apostles (Mark 9:1). The kingdom of Jesus on this earth is His church (Matthew 16:17-18) (see notes on 8:12; 17:7).

**whereof we all are witnesses:** The apostles are all witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus. This is one of the requirements necessary to be an apostle.

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

**Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted:** Peter answers an anticipated question, "Where is Jesus now?" He is "by the right hand of God." To be "by the right hand" is often used to indicate power (Psalm 17:7; 18:35). Thus, God has raised Jesus and has given Him power.

and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear: The events of Pentecost, just witnessed by the multitude, are the results of a promise made to the apostles by Jesus. These Jews have now seen and heard the results of that which "he hath shed forth" (see notes on 1:8).

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

**For David is not ascended into the heavens:** Peter continues his argument that David does not ascend to heaven to take a seat at "the right hand of God"; instead these words point to Jesus of Nazareth as the fulfillment of this prophecy. May it ever be declared "from henceforth shall the son of man be seated at the right hand of the power of God" (Luke 22:69).
he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand: David realizes he is not the one who is to sit on God’s right hand, but it will be Jesus:

This quotation from Psalm 110:1 indicated: (1) that the Son of David would also be the Lord of David (Matt.22:43ff), and (2) that the Son of David would sit on the right hand of God, an idiomatic promise of the ascension into heaven. Peter did not have to prove that David himself had not ascended to heaven, for his grave was still in Jerusalem (Coffman 53).

35 Until I make thy foes thy footstool.

More than likely, some of these same Jews have attempted to grapple with this thorny statement from David in a face-to-face confrontation with Jesus. Jesus asks them the question, “How could King David call his son Lord?” At that time "no man was able to answer him a word" (Matthew 22:43-46). Perhaps now some of these Jews have a better understanding. Peter is again declaring Jesus is the one who will reign until "the last enemy is destroyed." Paul explains this point: “For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (1 Corinthians 15:25-26).

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

Therefore let all the house of Israel: Peter now addresses "all the house of Israel," indicating none are to be left out and affirming the gospel is to "the Jew first" (Romans 1:16).

know assuredly: With the accumulation of proof that has been presented, Israel should have been able to understand “Jesus is Lord.”
that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified: Peter has no mercy on this crowd who "by wicked hands have crucified and slain" their long-looked-for Messiah. He lays the guilt for the crucifixion of Jesus squarely on the backs of these Jews. Peter certainly knows how to wield the "sword of the Spirit" so that it cuts the hearts of men.

both Lord and Christ: This is the conclusion and summation of the original gospel sermon. Jesus is "both Lord," which signifies having power or authority, "and Christ," literally the Anointed One or Messiah. This is the entire point of Peter's sermon. It is Jesus who has the power to reign in the kingdom of God. It is Jesus who is the Messiah.

The facts are all in:

1. Jesus has been "approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs" (verse 22).

2. "God hath raised Him (Jesus) from the dead" (verse 24).

3. Jesus is the son of David (verse 30).

4. Jesus, not David, is at "the right hand of God" (verse 33).

5. Jesus, not David, is the "Holy One" exalted to reign over the kingdom of God (verse 34).

The witness of the apostles, the testimony of the prophets, and the preaching of the gospel have all combined to establish the Lordship of Jesus.
The term "Jesus is Lord" often is made common by our society. The words appear as graffiti, on barns, bumper stickers, etc., but these words, as spoken by the Apostle Peter, are to impact this old world as it has never been impacted before. Here is the turning point for time itself. Man, by the sacrifice of Jesus, the only begotten of God, is brought to the Light. Man, who has been shackled by the bonds of sin since the Garden of Eden, can finally realize the forgiveness of his sin. This realization, JESUS IS LORD, was to energize and motivate the disciples of the first century to carry the gospel to the whole world in less than thirty years! May we also realize Jesus as Lord of our lives.

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

Now when they heard this: No doubt one could have heard a pin drop in this audience. The Jews have heard of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, and the power of the gospel is lying heavily on the consciences of those assembled (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

ey were pricked in their heart: The gospel has literally stung the hearts of these Jews. There is a new faith in the hearts of some. They have heard; now they believe in Jesus. “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17).

and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles: The fact that those "pricked in their heart" cry out to the apostles lends further evidence that only the apostles received the "baptism of the Holy Ghost" on Pentecost.
Men and brethren, what shall we do: Do about what? It is obvious when we remember what Peter has already taught in verse 21, "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." These poor guilt-ridden souls want to know, "What must I do to be saved?" Herein is an amazing thing; these Jews, some personally guilty of the crucifixion of Jesus, have heard the gospel for the first time, and now they are clamoring to discover the gospel's requirements for them.

What does Peter tell them they need to do in order to be saved? He most assuredly does not give them the same answer some people receive in our world today. He does not tell them to raise their hand, accept Jesus as their personal Savior and go on their way rejoicing, sign a prayer card, or join the church of their choice. In light of the answers we hear for this question today, some are no doubt surprised at Peter's answer. In the mind of many, Peter's answer would be called old fashioned, and that it is. It is the original answer to the age-old question, "What must I do to be saved?"

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

Then Peter said unto them: For the first time under the reign of Christ, the question is asked; and without hesitation the terms of salvation are announced by Peter.

Repent: To repent is to change one's mind so that a change of life is produced. Vine says, "In the N.T. the subject chiefly has reference to repentance from sin, and this change of mind involves both a turning from sin and a turning to God" (Vol. II. 281).
It should be noted that repentance is something a person does; it is not something one gets. In order to be saved, the Jews are expected to quit sinning and turn to God; no less is expected today.

**and be baptized:** The Jews are also instructed to be baptized. The very fact that baptism is a command allows us to understand that this baptism is water baptism. The baptism of the Holy Ghost, as we have already noticed, was the result of a promise. Baptism in water is the "one baptism" that is required of all would-be Christians (Ephesians 4:5). For the mode of baptism, see notes on Acts 8:38.

Interestingly enough, baptism is the one command most often neglected in all of the so-called Christian world; yet it is the only requirement that is mentioned in every act of conversion throughout the book of Acts. As surely as Peter fulfilled the great commission by demanding baptism in this initial gospel sermon, so also must baptism be taught and obeyed today (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15-16) (see notes on 8:12).

Notice the Bible record for the benefits of baptism:

1. You must be baptized to be saved (Mark 16:16).
2. Baptism is "for the remission of sins" (2:38).
3. Baptism will "wash sins away" (22:16).
4. Baptism puts one "into Christ" (Galatians 3:27).
5. Baptism saves us (1 Peter 3:21).

Garth Reese states the point very plainly: "If Christ commanded baptism, and He did (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16); and if one believes it necessary to keep a command of Christ to be saved, then baptism is necessary to salvation" (63).
every one of you: The requirements, "repent and be baptized," are the same requirements for "every one." It should also be noted that the blessings, "the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Ghost," are given to "every one."

in the name of Jesus Christ: In most cases the word, "name" (onoma), whether used with the preposition in, upon, or into, means with or by the authority of (Matthew 18:20; 28:19; Acts 8:16; 10:48).

for the remission of sins: For years there has been much dispute over the meaning of this phrase. The truth hinges upon the meaning of the word "for." In the Greek, the word rendered "for" is the little word eis. Does eis mean "because of" as some would maintain? We are baptized "because of the remission of sins." Or does "eis" mean "for" or "in order to" or "unto" the remission of sins as others would say? The dilemma is easily answered by a little Bible research. In the book of Matthew we find the exact phrase we are studying here in Acts 2:38. Jesus says, “For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:28).

Does "for" (eis) the remission of sins in Matthew mean that Jesus shed His blood because of the remission of sins, or does "for" (eis) the remission of sins in Matthew mean that Jesus shed His blood "for," "in order to" or "unto" the remission of sins? The conclusion is easy: we know Jesus did not shed His blood because of the remission of sins. It is equally clear that baptism is "for," "in order to," or "unto" the remission of sins.

As long as this verse remains in the sacred NT, the terms of admission into Christ's kingdom shall continue to be understood as faith (those were already believers), repentance, and baptism unto the remission of sins (Coffman 55).
The nay sayers may shout themselves hoarse as did the priests of Baal, the rebellious may wrestle the scriptures for a life time, but the truth of God's word stands: baptism in water for the remission of sins is a divinely appointed prerequisite for salvation (Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21).

**and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.** This text is often debated as to the *modus operandi* of the Holy Spirit. It will be the purpose of this writer to attempt to answer some of the questions that arise relative to this statement. We want to know: Who will receive this "gift"? What is the "gift of the Holy Ghost"? How does the Holy Spirit dwell in the Christian?

In this verse we find two commands expected of those who would obey God's will and two blessings that are a result of obedience to those commands. "Repent, and be baptized" are the commands; "the remission of sins" and the "gift of the Holy Ghost" are the blessings. It is clearly seen that the first blessing, "the remission of sins," is the result of baptism; "Repent and be baptized...for (in order to, unto) the remission of sins." The second blessing is in the form of a promise: "and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

Who is to receive this promised "gift of the Holy Ghost"? A look at the context will supply the answer. "Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you...for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." To whom is Peter speaking? "Every one of you" who will "repent and be baptized...shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." This promise will be extended to "as many as the Lord our God shall call" in the next verse.
Peter is speaking to thousands of people on this occasion, and the language is addressed to each person present. To whom are the commands issued? They are issued to everyone. To whom would the remission of sins be given? The remission of sins would be given to everyone who would repent and be baptized. To whom would the "gift of the Holy Spirit" be given? Everyone who would repent and be baptized would receive the "gift of the Holy Spirit." Three thousand people, according to verse 41, receive the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost (Wayne L. Fussell 262).

What is the gift of the Holy Ghost? This question may also be answered by a careful study of God's word. The Holy Spirit used language that is very specific to tell us what the "gift" is.

"Gift" (dorea) With an epexegetical genitive of the thing given, viz. Acts 2:38; 10:45; (Thayer 161-2-1431).

In Acts 2:38, "the gift of the Holy Ghost," the clause is epexegetical, the gift being the Holy Ghost Himself (Vine, Vol. I 147).

As noted in these definitions, the "gift of the Holy Ghost" is the Holy Ghost. Both Thayer and Vine explain that the word "gift" is added to clarify the object. Thus, the phrase "gift of the Holy Ghost" is epexegetical. Webster defines epexegetical as a means of further clarification as by the addition of a word or words (610). The word "gift" is added to clarify what the Holy Ghost is. What words could the apostle have used to make this teaching any plainer? He could have simply said, "You shall receive the Holy Spirit," but he clarifies this promise by adding the word "gift." The "Holy Ghost" is the "gift."
The Biblical scholarship of the world agrees, "the gift of the Holy Ghost" is the Holy Ghost. We have already noted Thayer and Vine but also:

The second blessing promised on condition of repentance and baptism, is the "gift of the Holy Spirit." By this is not meant that miraculous gift which had just been bestowed upon the apostles; for we know from the subsequent history that this gift was not bestowed on all who repented and were baptized, but on only a few brethren of prominence in the several congregations. The expression means the Holy Spirit as a gift; and the reference is to that indwelling of the Holy Spirit by which we bring forth the fruits of the spirit, and without which we are not of Christ (McGarvey, Vol. I 39).

The phrase "the gift of the Holy Ghost" occurs Acts ii:38, and x:45, and in both places must be understood as equivalent to "the Holy Spirit as a gift," yet we are persuaded that the same measure of the Spirit is not alluded to in both places (Brents 474).

The gift of the Spirit is the Spirit Himself, bestowed by the Father through the Messiah (Bruce 77).

The genitive is appositional; as in verse 33 the promise is the Holy Spirit, so here the gift is the Holy Spirit (Lenski 109).

It should be apparent by the language used that the inspired apostle intends for us to understand "the gift of the Holy Ghost" is the Holy Ghost Himself. This understanding eliminates the need to discuss the issue as to whether the "gift" is something the Holy Spirit gives. The answer is clear: the "gift" is not something from the Holy Spirit, as one of the gifts of the Spirit, but rather the "gift" IS the Holy Spirit.
Is it possible that the "gift of the Holy Spirit" is eternal life or perhaps salvation? No. It should be understood by all that when one repents, and is baptized he is not automatically assured of eternal life or salvation. Obedience to the gospel simply allows one to run in the Christian race; it does not guarantee the reward. The outcome depends on the faithfulness of the individual.

May it also be noted that the "gift of the Holy Ghost" is not an empowerment by the Holy Spirit that will allow the recipient to work miracles. If that were the case, "everyone" who repents and is baptized will have received the "remission of sins" and the power to work miracles, not only those present on Pentecost, but as verse 39 continues "the promise is unto ... even as many as the Lord our God shall call. If the "gift of the Holy Spirit" means miraculous gifts, we may claim miraculous gifts in fulfillment of this promise today! This result did not happen because "everyone" did not receive miraculous gifts. If they did receive miraculous gifts, what would have been the need for the laying on of the apostles’ hands? If the "gift" were the result of the laying on of the apostles’ hands, the apostles would have had to lay their hands on "every one" who was a baptized believer as well as laying their hands on "as many as the Lord our God shall call." The concept that the "gift" is a miraculous gift is not in keeping with the evidence found in God's word. Reese, in his excellent commentary, summarizes these thoughts thusly:

There is no suggestion here in 2:38 that the reception of the Holy Spirit by those who were immersed was conditioned upon having apostolic hands laid upon them. Further, the word "gift" here is "dorea," whereas the word used when spiritual gifts are intended is "charisma." Nor can the meaning be that every new convert receives the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The thing received, therefore, by the new converts was the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit (64).
We are now ready to consider one final question. How does this wonderful "gift of the Holy Spirit" dwell in Christians? The concept of the Holy Spirit's dwelling in the Christian is generally accepted by Bible students. The question is, “How does He dwell in the Christian?” Basically there are two ideas concerning the answer to this question. There are those who believe the Holy Spirit dwells in the Christian through the word of God only. This explanation falls short of the evidence revealed by the Bible. On the day of Pentecost, those who repented and were baptized had already "gladly received the "word" (Acts 2:41). It was the "word" that "pricked" them "in their heart" (Acts 2:37). They were encouraged to "save themselves,… with many other words" (Acts 2:40). All of this happened before they were baptized "for the remission of sins" or received the "gift of the Holy Ghost." The conclusion can be drawn that one may have the word of God and still not have the "gift of the Holy Ghost." Who has not witnessed the religious racketeer who makes merchandise of God's word; the false teacher who, by twisting and wrestling the scriptures, deceives many; or even the arch deceiver, Satan himself, who historically has shown a great knowledge of God's word by misquoting and contradicting? These may be full of the word; but, without contradiction, they have not the Holy Spirit.

The conclusion that we are led to by the divinely inspired word should now be clear. The "gift" is the Holy Spirit Himself Who comes to dwell in the heart of every Christian.

But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his (Romans 8:9).

And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him (Acts 5:32).
What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own (1 Corinthians 6:19)?

These are but a few of the many passages that inform us of this truth (see also 1 Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 1:13-14; 1 John 3:24; 4:12-13). One of the basic rules of Bible interpretation is that words must be understood in their literal sense unless such literal interpretation creates a contradiction or absurdity. The passages cited above create neither a contradiction nor an absurdity. They should be taken literally. All of the expressions--"The Spirit of God dwell in you"; "the Holy Ghost whom God hath given to them who obey Him"; "your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost ... which is in you,"-- tell us the Holy Spirit literally dwells in us. What language could God have used, other than these words, to communicate that the Holy Spirit dwells in the Christian?

To summarize this lengthy commentary, "the gift of the Holy Spirit" in Acts 2:38 is the Holy Spirit Himself. "Every one" who is commanded to "repent, and be baptized ... for the remission of sins," is also given the promise of the Holy Spirit as a "gift." The "gift of the Holy Spirit," which is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in every Christian, has no reference to the miraculous gifts of the Spirit given through the laying on of the apostles' hands. The Holy Spirit dwells literally in every Christian as a result of this promise. (Note parallel verses in John 3:5 and Titus 3:5.)
39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

**For the promise:** The promise referred to is the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Paul makes reference to this promise:

In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, ... (Ephesians 1:13).

**is unto you:** "You" is a reference to the Jews in Peter’s audience.

**and to your children:** The "promise" is also to future generations of Jews.

**and to all that are afar off:** Those "afar off" is a reference to the Gentiles. Here the apostle makes a statement, by inspiration, that he really does not understand. The concept of the Gentiles being acceptable to God is unthought of by the Jews, especially by the Apostle Peter. It will take a miracle later to allow Peter to see the truth of the words he has spoken (Acts 10:14-15).

**even as many as the Lord our God shall call:** The gospel call is universal. The promise is for all who will come in compliance with God's terms. In the Christian age, there is to be no distinction made in nationality, race, sex, social status: the invitation is to "whosoever will" (Revelation 22:17). Peter will teach later in this book, “… Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Act 10:34-35).
Here is additional information that allows us to know the "gift of the Holy Ghost" is for "as many as the Lord our God shall call." The same "gift of the Holy Ghost," that is given on Pentecost, is given today to those who will "repent, and be baptized." That gift is the personal indwelling of God's Holy Spirit.

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

**And with many other words did he testify and exhort:** Luke, in his record of the events of Pentecost, has given us a summary of Peter's sermon. Peter has revealed Jesus as the Messiah. He has answered the question that has haunted man up to this point in history, "what shall we do" to be saved? The initiative for salvation now rests with men.

**saying, Save yourselves:** May this passage lay to rest forever the notion that we must beg God to save us. The concept of the "mourners' bench" where the alien sinner is encouraged to plead with God for salvation is foreign to the scriptures. When it comes to man's salvation, God has provided the sacrifice for sin and the plan for salvation; He has literally held the world on course that man might have the time to obey (2 Peter 3:9). It is up to man to make the move. If one is lost, it is no one's fault but his own. Man is responsible for his own salvation.

**from this untoward generation:** "Untoward" (skolios) means crooked; "it is set in contrast to (orthos) and (euthus), straight" (Vine, Vol. IV 256). Luke is literally saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.”
41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were
added unto them about three thousand souls.

Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: When the gospel seed is sown in
good and honest hearts, fruit is produced. When God’s word is received, it requires
obedience; as seen here, they “were baptized.” It will be noted throughout the study of the
book of Acts that every time the gospel is received in the hearts of men, they are baptized.
Why are they always baptized? They are baptized for the remission of sins.

and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls: What a
revival! On this day, some 3000 Jews throw off the darkness, bondage, and death of the Old
Testament and leap out into the light, freedom, and life provided under the New Testament of
Jesus Christ. Man truly has been revived and given hope.

These 3000 new converts "were added" unto the company of the apostles and the 120
disciples (1:15). This, thus far, nameless community of believers is the first body of Christians.

Incidental to this verse, there are those who dispute baptism as immersion in water by saying it
would not have been possible for the twelve to immerse three thousand in one day. Sadly, it
seems there are always scoffers lining the banks, ready to say something in contradiction to
God's word. To discover what a lame objection this is, please note the following calculations:
Peter’s sermon began at nine o’clock, and we may safely suppose that the proceedings at the temple closed as early as noon. This allows six hours for the baptizing to be completed that day, as the text asserts. It is very deliberate work for an administrator to baptize one person in a minute; and if he stands at one spot, as is often the case when a large number are to be baptized, and has the candidates to come and go in a continuous line, the work can be done in half this time. But, at the rate of sixty to the hour, twelve men could baptize seven hundred and twenty in one hour, and three thousand in four hours and a quarter (McGarvey, Vol. I 44).

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

And they continued stedfastly: These disciples are regular and consistent in their new opportunities and responsibilities.

in the apostles’ doctrine: This "doctrine" points to the word of God being taught by the apostles.

and fellowship: This fellowship is their opportunity to share in religious privileges as well as to be a part of the family of God. They are now brothers and sisters in Christ and sons and daughters of God. The original term for fellowship is broader than our idea of fellowship today. It includes the concept of contribution and probably carried with it the idea of the sharing of material goods.

and in breaking of bread: The “breaking of bread” is an expression referring to the regular observation of the Lord’s supper, which is celebrated on a weekly basis (Acts 20:7).
**and in prayers:** Prayer is the hallmark of the Christian. These new disciples are taking advantage of praying together.

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

The fear that comes upon the people in general is not a terror that produces an aversion to the disciples but rather the awe and respect naturally inspired by a group manifesting miracles, reverence for God, and a new found direction toward holy living.

Here also is further proof that the only ones possessing miraculous abilities are the apostles. The "wonders and signs were done by the apostles," not the 120 or the new converts.

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

The effect of Christianity on the individual should produce a telling change. This is very much the case in Jerusalem.

This conduct was in marked contrast with the neglect of the poor which was then common among the Jews, in violation of their own law, and which was universal among the Gentiles (McGarvey, Vol. I 48).
45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.

The needs of all are taken care of. These fledgling disciples have already recognized the badge of Christianity. Jesus gives a hallmark for Christians when He says, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35).

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

And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple: The Jewish temple is the assembling place for the disciples. The courts of the temple are open at all times. It provides an ideal place for these first Christians to assemble, not only because of the room but also because the Jews gathered there, thus giving the opportunity to expose others to the gospel.

and breaking bread from house to house: This breaking of bread is not in reference to the communion service, as is verse 42, but to a common meal.

did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart: This verse describes the sheer joy the disciples have in being together. They rejoice in sharing meals together.

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

Praising God, and having favour with all the people: This group of young Christian disciples continue to praise God and make a good impression on the community.
And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved: The words, "to the church," are not in the Greek. The idea is that daily men and women who become believers are joined together into the one body. The Greek is "epi to auto," the very same phrase translated "were together" in verse 44" (Reese 71). The first time the word "church" (ekklesia) appears in the original text of the book of Acts is in chapter five at verse 11. (Please see notes on 5:11 for additional notes on "the church.")

When one becomes "such as should be saved," the Lord adds him to the church (the body of believers). The condition for entrance is obedience to the gospel, which includes baptism "for the remission of sins." The requirements are the same today. When one obeys the gospel, we are not to take a vote to see if we want to accept him; he does not "join the church"; upon obedience, the Lord adds him to His church.

The "saved" are in the church. Never forget the church is not a physical building, rather it is an assembly of people who are "such as should be saved." The word used in this verse that is translated "church" is literally "assembly" (New Englishman's Greek Concordance and Lexicon 253).

It is a blatant strike against the Lord's church when one says, "You don't have to be a member of any church to be saved" or "No church ever saved anyone." Again, the truth shines through, if I want to be saved, I must be a part of the Lord's church because the "such as should be saved" are in the church.
Perhaps there is one other question that needs to be addressed at this point in our study. To which "church" are these "such as should be saved" being added? Imagine one of these first converts to Christianity wiping the water of baptism from his eyes and asking Peter, “Of which church am I now a member?” Peter might have pushed his head back under the water and held him until he came to a more perfect understanding! Today this might be a legitimate question as there are more than a thousand different denominations each claiming to be the church that Christ built. Remember these facts:

1) Christ referred to the church as "my church," very possessively his (Matthew 16:18).
2) Christ purchased the church with his own blood (Acts 20:28).
3) Christ is the head of the church (Ephesians 5:23).
4) The church is the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23).

With all candor, does this church not have to be Christ's church or the church of Christ? Where did we ever get the idea of the "church of your choice" (Romans 16:16)?

What a chapter this one has been. Literally, it is the turning point for the whole world. This working, happy church will soon feel the onslaught of Satan as he works through the religious people of that day to discourage and disperse the Lord's people.
Chapter 3

The labors of the apostles have thus far met with unqualified success, but major disappointment and trouble are on the horizon. This chapter deals with the healing of a congenital cripple and the subsequent way the people receive Peter and John.

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

Now Peter and John: Peter and John are two old friends, having once been in the fishing business together before Jesus gave them the higher calling to become "fishers of men." They, along with James, seem to hold a special place in Jesus' heart, and they are with Him on many special occasions. Peter and John will accomplish much together for the cause of Christ.

went up together into the temple: As previously noted in Acts 2:46, the temple is the gathering place for the Lord's church for the first few years of its existence. The temple provides a public place to assemble as well as a ready audience of Jews.

at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour: Historically, the Jews had formal prayer at the third, sixth, and ninth hours. As they reckoned time, counting from approximately six o'clock in the morning, the ninth hour was three o'clock in the afternoon (2:15).
2 And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple;

And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried: This poor man has some congenital ailment that has left him crippled from birth. By this time, he is more than forty years old (4:22). This man is the perfect choice to use in demonstrating the power of God. He is known by all, and all know he has always been crippled to the point he must be carried.

whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful: This gate called Beautiful is the most luxurious of the nine doors into the temple. "It was adorned after a most costly manner, as having much richer and thicker plates of silver and gold..." (Josephus 784).

to ask alms of them that entered into the temple The cripple has been laid at the Beautiful gate because it is the most popular entrance into the temple. Here the cripple would have the greatest opportunity to receive alms because of the increased number of people using this entrance.

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

The cripple evidently knows nothing more about Peter and John than he would anyone else going into the temple. He requests of them a gift as is his custom.

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

The cripple becomes the focus of the attention of Peter and John and receives the command, "Look on us."
And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them: Instead of a gift from Peter and John, as he might have expected, the cripple is about to receive a gift about which he has only dreamed.

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

Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: It is not known how long after Pentecost this incident takes place, but it is likely this is not the first miracle Peter has performed (2:43). With a boldness that could have come only from experience, Peter declares he has none of those things usually given as "alms," but he will not leave the cripple without a gift, a gift far better than "silver and gold."

In the name of: The usual meaning is "by the authority of" (2:38; 8:16).

Jesus Christ of Nazareth: All things in Christianity are to be done "in the name of" or by the authority of Jesus.

And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus…

(Colossians 3:17).

rise up and walk: This command must have been totally unexpected by the cripple. It is certain he has been ordered about in many different ways as he lies at the gate called Beautiful, but nothing has ever been said to him to match these orders. Peter says," Get up and walk!"
And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.

Peter encourages the cripple by taking him by the right hand and lifting him up. This incidental account also further confirms Luke as the writer of Acts. The training of Luke as a physician now becomes obvious as the writer describes, in the terms of a doctor, how the cripple’s "feet and ankle bones received strength."

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

As the cripple feels the healing in his bones, he does not need any more encouraging from Peter. He leaps up, and again as a physician might explain, he "stood" and then he "walked." Something else has happened to this man: he is now ready to "praise God" in thanksgiving for his healing.

It should also be noted that a genuine, miraculous healing occurs instantaneously for all to see. How many times today do we see severed ears reattached with a touch (Luke 22:50-51)? How many times have we seen blind eyes opened, withered hands restored, or a lame man leap to his feet because of a command or a prayer? Professed modern miracle workers cannot match the genuine miracles of the Bible with their counterfeit claims.

And all the people saw him walking and praising God: This man, whom everyone knows has been a cripple for more than forty years, is now "walking" and thanking God for his healing. For certain no small stir will arise over this happening.
10 And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him.

As stated earlier, this cripple is a prime target for the miracle performed upon him because everyone knows him. There would be no doubt as to the validity of the miracle. The healing of this cripple should have struck a familiar chord in the minds of some of these Jews, who were students of the prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah. Isaiah prophesies, "Then shall the lame man leap as an hart… (Isaiah 35:6). Jesus also tells John the Baptist one of the signs of His coming was “the lame walk” (Matthew 11:5; Luke 7:22).

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

And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John: The "lame man" is so thrilled with his healing that he will not physically allow Peter and John to go; thus, the spotlight of attention is not only upon him but also upon them.

all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering: The crowd is amazed and perplexed by the powerful happening. A crowd has a way of growing just from the excitement and the unknown element involved; such is the case here. Since so many of the activities of the early church happen in the vicinity of the temple and in particular Solomon’s porch, it will be of value to understand something about the structure.
The structure that is here called a "porch" was a colonnade constructed along the inner face of the enclosing wall of the outer court. It consisted, according to Josephus, of rows of stone columns twenty-seven feet high, with a roof of cedar resting on them and on the wall, so as to constitute a covered portico, with its inner side open toward the temple. On the eastern side of the court there were two rows of these columns, making that portico sixty feet deep and as long as the wall, which Josephus estimates at a furlong, though its exact measurement today is fifteen hundred and thirty feet. Across the southern end, which now measures nine hundred and twenty-two feet, there were between them, each thirty feet deep, and consequently the depth of this portico was ninety feet. These immense covered porticos, or cloisters, as Josephus calls them, served as a protection from the sun in the summer, and from the rain in the winter. They contained space sufficient for the great multitude of the disciples when assembled in one mass (McGarvey, Vol. I I 52).

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

And when Peter saw it: When Peter realizes the wonder that has been created by this miracle and the crowd that is drawn as a result, he takes advantage of the situation by preaching to the gathering Jews.
he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk: Peter respectfully addresses the audience as "Ye men of Israel" and then quickly asks, “Why do you stare at us as though the power you have just witnessed, in the healing of this cripple, came directly from us?” Peter is laying the groundwork to introduce Jesus to these people and to make clear the power to heal came by the authority of Jesus Christ.

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

The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers: God reveals Himself to Moses as the "God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Jacob" (Exodus 3:6). Perhaps Peter uses this ancient way of referring to God to define clearly, in the minds of this Jewish audience, that he is talking about God the Father and to stir their respect and reverence for the Father of the patriarchs.

hath glorified his Son Jesus: This God of the patriarchs has "glorified his Son Jesus." Thayer gives this comment on glorified: “God exalting, or rather restoring, Christ the Son to a state of glory in heaven” (157-1-1392).

In most translations (NIV, ASV, RSV), the passage "glorified his Son Jesus" is rendered "glorified his Servant Jesus." By these words, Peter identifies Jesus as the suffering Servant prophesied in Isaiah 42:1, 52:13, and 53:11. Campbell says, “... it should here be servant, not son. ... Jesus was personally a son, officially a servant” (22).
whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go: Surely this accusation that Peter makes, when he rehearses the account of Jesus before the Roman governor Pilate, must have tormented the conscience of some of these Jews. Peter contrasts the treatment Jesus receives from the "God of our fathers," as compared to the treatment these very Jews have given Him. God has "glorified Him" while they have "delivered," "denied" and "killed the Prince of life."

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

The Jews request the release of a known murderer instead of allowing Jesus to be released. Matthew records the following account:

The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas. Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified (27:21-22).

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

And killed the Prince of life: The name "Prince of life" is a wonderful appellation to give to Jesus, but this term is more properly translated "Author of Life." "Archegos, though sometimes rendered prince, means, primarily, beginning, and thence originator, author" (Vincent 462) (Hebrews 12:2).
Peter, in his own fearless way, continues to increase the pressure on his audience with an antithetical style that is intended to bore into the conscience of these Jews. He builds upon the facts that "the God of our Fathers" has "glorified" Jesus while they have delivered Him up to die. Pilate desires to let Jesus go while they cry out "let Him be crucified." Then, as though to twist the knife once more in the guilty hearts of his audience, Peter accuses them of granting a murderer's release "and of killing the Author of Life." The Jews put Jesus to death, but God raises Him to life. What a sermon!

**whom God hath raised from the dead:** The glorious gospel of Christ, the power of God unto salvation, is preached again by Peter. May it forever be understood, not just by the Jews who are in Peter's audience, but by all men everywhere: Jesus died for our sins, was buried, and rose again to bring salvation to mankind (Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4). This truth will haunt the minds of the Jews in eternity.

**whereof we are witnesses:** The historical events of the life of Jesus are well known. The fact that He is crucified is established, and the fact of His resurrection is witnessed by Peter and John. Who could deny it?
16 And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

**And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong:** Peter is cautious to make this statement very clear. He wants no one to get the mistaken idea there is some magical power in saying the name Jesus, but rather it is faith in Jesus that produces the miraculous results. Although the apostles have received the ability to work miracles by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, it is evident they also have to have faith in order to exercise this miraculous ability. This lesson is learned early on by the apostles when, much to their shame, they miserably fail in an effort to perform a miracle (Matthew 17:19-20; Luke 17:5-6).

It must also be noted that Peter is the one needing the faith to work the miracle. There is no scriptural indication whatsoever that the cripple has any faith at all in Jesus, but it is not necessary that he have faith; the one working the miracle is the one in need of faith. Today, when some of our modern so-called faith healers fail in their healing, the excuse is the candidate for healing does not have enough faith. May the example of the lame man forever lay to rest this excuse; as can be seen here, faith on the part of the one to be healed is unnecessary. In the Bible, the only failures mentioned in regards to miracles are because of the lack of faith on the part of the one attempting to perform the miracle (Matthew 17:14-20; Mark 9:29).

**whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all:** The faith that is by Him (Jesus) is the faith that has healed the cripple and made him whole, as they could all see.
17 And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers.

It is here Peter seems to take a new more conciliatory tack in his sermon. It is possible he senses a depression and hopelessness in his audience; so he will now offer an extenuation of the guilt of Israel by explaining that "I wot (know) that through ignorance ye did it." The fact they are ignorant does not make them innocent, but this incident does provide Peter with the opportunity to offer a free pardon to all.

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

The mistreatment and eventual crucifixion of Jesus, which is ignorantly carried out by these Jews, is also a fulfillment of the will of God, as foretold by the prophets. In this revelation we have a most interesting and thought-provoking dilemma. That God has "ordained before the world" the death of Jesus cannot be denied; and, that those who "by wicked hands have crucified and slain" the Son of God in fulfillment of the prophecies have committed a wicked and sinful deed is admitted by some three thousand on the day of Pentecost. This line of thought presents no difficulty to Peter, and it should not to us. God, in His august wisdom, intends the salvation of man through the death of His Son; nevertheless, the actual deed of crucifying Jesus is a wicked and sinful crime for which man would give an account.
19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

Unlike those on Pentecost, these do not ask "what shall we do," but Peter proceeds to extend the gospel invitation to them anyway. The commands are the same as those given in Acts 2:38, with a slight difference in wording; the verses in Acts 2:38 and 3:19 are parallel verses. In chapter two, they are told to: (1) "repent and (2) be baptized ... (3) for the remission of sins and (4) ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Here, they are instructed to (1) "repent and (2) be converted, (3) that your sins may be blotted out" and (4) "the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." It is easy to see that (1), (3), and (4) are synonymous; the only term that leaves any discussion at all is (2). The word "converted" means "to turn again" (Vine, Vol. I 239). The greatest "turn" in a person's life occurs in baptism when his sins are remitted (2:38) and he is saved (Mark 16:16). "The blotting out of sins is equivalent to remission of sins; and being baptized is tantamount to turning again" (Boles 59).

The thought behind "turn again" is nothing short of baptism. The Jews no doubt had witnessed the baptism of persons every day (2:47); and thus when Peter called upon them to "repent" and "turn again," they knew exactly what he inferred (De Welt 60).

It may also be found of value to compare not only Acts 2:38 and 3:19 but also John 3:5 and Titus 3:5. These verses describe the same spiritual event.

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

And he shall send Jesus Christ: Peter points out two additional inducements to encourage obedience to his sermon. The first is they would receive the "times of refreshing"; the second is some glorious day Jesus Christ will be sent to judge the world. Preparation is imperative.
which before was preached unto you: This teaching is to remind them that the same Jesus, the theme of this discourse, is coming again.

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

Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things: Jesus will remain in heaven until the purpose of God is completed on earth. This text seems to imply that the beginning of "restitution" or restoring to a better state begins with the first coming of Jesus and will be brought to completion at His second coming.

which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began: This "restitution" or a bringing of better things has been prophesied by all the prophets. The fingers of prophecy throughout the Old Testament point to the coming of better things when Jesus the Messiah comes.

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

Peter never misses an opportunity to call the Old Testament heroes to be witness for the testimony he has just delivered. This is a most effective technique to persuade the Jews.
For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me: The prophecy referred to is in Deuteronomy 18:15-19. In that passage, the patriarch Moses predicts the coming of Jesus and describes Him as one like himself. There truly are many likenesses and contrasts between Moses and Jesus. Moses is a deliverer; he delivers Israel from Egyptian bondage. Jesus is a deliverer; he delivers man from the bondage of sin. Moses is a lawgiver; he gives the Old Testament covenant to Israel. Jesus is also a lawgiver, having given the New Testament, a "more excellent ministry," "established upon better promises" (Hebrews 8:6). The similarities are so many that the Jews should have realized the testimony of Peter about Jesus is true.

him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you: Jesus, not Moses, is to be heard in everything He shall say.

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

Under the rule of Moses, the Israelites who were rebellious and contrary to the law were cut off (Exodus 12:15-19; 22:20). Under the reign of King Jesus, those who are contrary and disobedient, all who are classified as unrighteous, are to be punished everlastingly (Matthew 25:46).
24 Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.

Peter now calls on not just the witness of Moses but the witness of "all the prophets since Samuel." Samuel is not the first prophet, according to the account of Jude 14-15. The first prophet on record is Enoch, but Samuel begins a line of prophets. It is to this line of prophets, since Samuel, that Peter calls to bear record of Jesus. Peter shows great wisdom and an understanding of human nature in this line of reasoning. If the Jews reject Peter’s teaching, they reject Christ; if they reject Jesus, they reject the teaching of their own prophets.

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

Having made his case by calling to remembrance Moses and the prophets, Peter now makes his strongest appeal to his audience by referring back to their beloved Abraham. Abraham also received a promise concerning Jesus.

And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed because thou hast obeyed my voice (Genesis 22:18; 12:3; 18:18).

The inference is the same: if they reject the sermon of Peter, they are rejecting Christ; to reject Christ is to reject Abraham.
26 Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

_Unto you first:_ The gospel is to be preached "to the Jew first" (Romans 1:16), but the insinuation is it will not be to the Jew only. Whether the Jews understand this teaching or not is doubtful. It is incredulous to them that the Gentiles will ever be included in the blessings of God.

_God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities:_ This is a final and special appeal to these Jews. God sends His Son Jesus, first to the Jews, to turn everyone of them away from their sins. Peter makes a concluding attempt at bringing this crowd to obedience; Moses, the prophets, Abraham, all are witnesses, in prophecy, of the coming of Jesus. Peter's audience should see by now that to reject Jesus is to make null and void the many revelations from these respected prophets and patriarchs of old. Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of prophecy and the redeemer of souls.

It is speculated Peter would have pressed for obedience at this place in his speech, as he does in Acts 2:40, but that will not happen this time. Peter's sermon is aborted at this point by the "priests, and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees" who are "grieved" at his teaching (4:1-2).
Chapter 4

Until now, the work of the apostles has met very little resistance from the religious organizations of the day, but that situation is soon to change. As the preaching of Jesus Christ begins to attract the multitudes, the opposition comes forward. Satan soon musters his forces of truth haters and, led by the historic enemies of Christ, the Sadducees, mounts an attack on Peter and John.

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

And as they spake unto the people: Peter and John continue the sermon begun in chapter three, but the sermon is interrupted before they can present the final appeal.

the priests: These are those Levites who serve on a daily basis in the temple.

and the captain of the temple: The "captain of the temple" is the chief leader of a select group of Levites first organized by David and originally called "porters" (2 Chronicles 8:14). It is the duty of the "captain" to lead this elite guard of temple policemen in keeping order in the temple. More than one man holds this important position, and it is believed they took turn about in the discharge of their official duties (Luke 22:4, 52).
and the Sadducees, came upon them: The Sadducees are one of five major sects into which the Jewish people are divided in New Testament times.

The rabbis say that the party took its name from its founder, Zadok (Sadouk, Greek), who lived about BC 300. But since it appears the members and adherents of the highest priestly aristocracy constitute the party, it is now generally believed the name refers to the high priest Zadok, who officiated in David's reign, and in whose family the high priesthood remained until the political confusion of the Maccabean times, his descendants and partisans being Zadokites or Sadducees" (Reese 162).

These Sadducees must have smarted at the teaching of the resurrection of Jesus because one of the chief tenets of their doctrine is the denial of a resurrection.

This Jewish sect was composed of proud, secular materialists who denied the existence of a spiritual world, holding that neither angels nor demons existed, denying any such thing as the resurrection, and rejecting the OT scriptures, except for parts of them which had political utility, and also refusing the tradition of the elders. Through wealth and political power they had gained control of the religious apparatus which ran the temple, the office of the high priest being regularly filled from this group. Their pipe-dream of having silenced forever the claims of Jesus Christ by their wanton murder of him was rudely shattered by the incident recorded in the last chapter. Not only was Christ alive, but he had ascended to the right hand of God, had poured out the marvelous power of the Holy Spirit upon the Twelve; and the astounding miracles that had accompanied the personal ministry of Christ were continuing through the apostles who wrought such signs "in the name of" that same Christ (Coffman 81)!
Luke makes the evidence clear: the same Jews who rejected and eventually crucified Jesus, continue their relentless rebellion and opposition to the purposes of God by combating the preaching of the resurrection of Jesus. In spite of the grace of God, which has provided numerous opportunities for the Jews to hear and obey the gospel, it seems the majority are determined to discard the eternal salvation that comes through Jesus Christ.

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

Being grieved that they taught the people: These Jews are not a little upset at the teaching of the apostles; they are "sore troubled" (RSV).

and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead: For the Sadducees, the bold teaching of the resurrection has blatantly struck a doctrinal nerve; they will not take this dalliance with their doctrine lying down. Truly, in the minds of the Sadducees, their fears have come to pass; "the last error shall be worse than the first" (Matthew 27:64),

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

The unhappiness of the Sadducees over the preaching of the resurrection of Jesus now takes a physical turn; the apostles are arrested and put in jail. The apostles come to the temple at the hour of prayer, which is about three o’clock; now it is "eventide" or evening about six o’clock (3:1).
4 Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.

Howbeit: “Howbeit” literally means “but” or “notwithstanding.” The idea is notwithstanding the reception of the teaching of Peter and John by the Sadducees, there are many who do receive their teaching.

many of them which heard the word believed: The power of the gospel is again felt in the hearts of men. The gospel has been preached to men, they have ”heard,” and the result is they ”believe.” This is exactly the way the gospel is intended to work. Paul says, “So then faith [cometh] by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17).

One needs to understand that ”believed” is not indicated here or anywhere else in God’s word as the sole condition for salvation. ”Believed” is a scriptural expression for the entire change brought about by one’s faith in the gospel (see 10:43 and 13:39 for more extensive notes).

and the number of the men was about five thousand: There is some discussion as to the “five thousand” mentioned here. Most scholars agree this ”five thousand” includes the original three thousand who obey the gospel in chapter two verse 41.

It does not appear probable that five thousand should have been assembled and converted in Solomon’s porch (chap iii. 11.) on occasion of the cure of the lame man. Luke, doubtless, means to say that, up to this time, the number of persons who had joined themselves to the apostles was about five thousand (Barnes 401).
The results, just recorded in these verses, are to be repeated over and over again. The Lord's church now numbers five thousand men, not to mention at least an equal number of women. (Women were often not mentioned, as was the Eastern custom). The fire kindled on the day of Pentecost will soon sweep the world. The religious leaders of the day recognize the threat to their very existence, but nothing they do will turn back the new hope burning in the hearts of men.

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

And it came to pass on the morrow: The apostles spend the night in jail. On the next day, they are to be brought before the authorities.

that their rulers, and elders, and scribes: Luke here refers to the Jewish Sanhedrin. This assembly constitutes what we would refer to as the Supreme Court of the Jews. This is the same assembly that condemned Jesus to death (Matthew 26:57), but their problem does not go away when they crucify Jesus.

The Sanhedrin before whom the apostles were arraigned consisted of seventy men (or seventy-one -- seventy members plus Moses. Num. 11:16). The Sanhedrin was composed of twenty-four priests, twenty-two lawyers (not "lawyers" as we understand that term) and twenty-four elders. These were the "rulers and elders" spoken of earlier. This council was the highest court in the Jewish state. They had no power to pass the death sentence but their recommendation to Herod carried real weight. The cases before this court were all of a religious nature (De Welt 67).
6 And Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem.

After referring to the makeup of the Sanhedrin in general terms, Luke now becomes more specific in the naming of ranking members of the court.

**And Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas:** McGarvey explains the mention of both Annas and Caiaphas as follows:

Annas, whom Luke both here and in his former narrative calls high priest, was the lawful high priest, but he had been deposed by Valerius Gratus, the predecessor of Pilate, and Caiaphas, his son-in-law, had been by the same unlawful procedure put in his place, so that while the latter was holding the office, the other was lawfully entitled to it, and was recognized as high priest by the people (Vol. I 69).

Luke does not make a mistake in naming both of these men, as some have falsely speculated.

**and John, and Alexander:** The fact that these two men are mentioned by name, indicates they are men of reputation and authority. Nothing more is known of them.

**and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem:** Besides the men named, several other relatives of the high priest are in attendance at this hearing. Historians bear out the fact that this highest court of the Jews, primarily made up of Sadducean priests, is a wicked and conscienceless group capable of any evil deed.
7 And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?

And when they had set them in the midst, they asked: It was customary that the Sanhedrin gather in a semicircle and set the accused before them to be tried.

By what power, or by what name, have ye done this: This question shows that in spite of the fact this self-righteous Sanhedrin has had all night to trump up some charges against the apostles they have come up empty. Perhaps by asking this question the court thinks the apostles would incriminate themselves.

The question propounded is remarkable for its vagueness: "By what power, or by what name have ye done this?" Done what? might have been the answer. Done this preaching? or this miracle? or what? The question specified nothing, and the obvious reason is that there was no particular thing done by Peter and John on which they dared to fix attention, or on which they could base a charge of wrong doing. (McGarvey, Vol. I 70).

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

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost: As Jesus predicts before His death, Peter now speaks by the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit (see notes on 2:4). This eventuality, predicted by Jesus, has now come to pass.

But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you (Matthew 10:19-20).
said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel: As always Peter addresses his accusers with courtesy and with respect for who they are.

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

If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man: Remember Peter is supposed to be on the defensive; but as is characteristic with him, he takes control of the situation and moves to the offense. If the problem is the good deed performed to make a lame man whole, Peter is more than willing to answer that charge.

by what means he is made whole: This portion of the question the judges will quickly wish had gone unasked. They open the door for Peter to declare once again the resurrected Jesus as the source of the power that healed the impotent man.

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

Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel: Peter wants the truth he is about to deliver to be known by everyone.

that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth: The Jews will never be allowed to forget Jesus of Nazareth (see notes on 2:22). "By the name of" indicates by the authority of (see notes on 2:38).
whom ye crucified: Peter never misses an opportunity to lay the guilt of the death of Jesus on the Jews. Without hesitation, he reminds these Jews, some of whom are painfully aware of the truth of his statements, they are the ones who crucified Him "whom God hath raised up," the "Prince of life," Jesus of Nazareth (2:23; 3:15).

whom God raised from the dead: On every opportunity afforded him, Peter reaffirms the resurrection of Jesus. This teaching is especially resented by the Sadducees because they deny the doctrine of resurrection. Peter does not hesitate to attack their false doctrine to their face.

even by him doth this man stand here before you whole: The conclusion is that Jesus of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God hath raised from the dead, is the source of this healing power they have witnessed.

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

This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders: This rejected stone is a direct reference to Jesus. This prophecy is first mentioned by the psalmist David and later by Jesus Himself (Psalm 118:22; Matthew 21:42). Peter and Paul later refer to this prophecy in reference to Jesus (Ephesians 2:20; 1 Peter 2:4-6).

which is become the head of the corner: The Jews, in their rejection of Jesus, reject the "chief corner stone" (Ephesians 2:20).
12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

Neither is there salvation in any other: Peter's message builds to this universal conclusion: there is salvation in none other save Jesus Christ. Surely the conclusion must have registered on this audience: when one rejects Jesus, he rejects salvation.

for there is none other name under heaven given among men: We must also recognize that our salvation is in the name of (by the authority of) Jesus. No one will be saved in the name of Buddha, Mohammed, Joseph Smith, Judge Rutherford, Mary Baker Eddy, or anyone else.

whereby we must be saved: What other words could the divine writer have used to make this statement any more universal or any more emphatic.

Jesus is the only hope of salvation for the whole world. In the Greek the "we" is the last word in the Greek sentence; it means "we"--priests, elders, scribes, fishermen—all of us here must be saved by faith and obedience in the Christ (Boles 68).
13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

**Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John:** There is a confidence that comes from knowing God is on our side that can transform timid, otherwise insignificant men into great and powerful workers for the Lord. This confidence is evident in such men as David, Daniel, Joshua, Paul, and a host of others who knew "if God be for us, who can be against us" (Romans 8:31). We should take heart today and boldly stand up for what we believe.

Whatever else the rulers beheld or understood on that day, one thing they did not miss, and that was "the boldness of Peter and John." In the face of judgment and death, they were unafraid to lay the charge of the death of Jesus at the feet of the very ones who were judging them. They were unafraid to call upon the leaders in Israel to find salvation in the name of the very one they had slain (De Welt 67).

**and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men:** The charge of ignorance is often made against these Galilaean apostles, but here as Coffman says:

It is the smug and arrogant pride of the Sadducees which surfaces here, there being utterly no reflection upon the intelligence and understanding of those great men who were the apostles of the Son of God. Luke, in this place, was clearly giving not his own evaluation of the Twelve, but that of the Sanhedrin (90).

**they marvelled:** This tribunal of the educated elite of their day is amazed and confounded that these assumed "ignorant and unlearned" men can speak with such assurance and boldness.
and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus: What a wonderful conclusion to the performance of Peter and John. These "enemies of the cross" know by the actions of the apostles "they had been with Jesus." The presence of Jesus should be reflected in the lives of all Christians.

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

And beholding the man which was healed standing with them: The absolute proof of the miracle performed by the apostles is undeniable. He is standing, living, and breathing, right before their very eyes. He is living proof of the power of "Jesus of Nazareth." The Apostle Peter shows the inspired leading of God in his choice of the issue he would defend; "if we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man" (verse 9).

they could say nothing against it: What could they say? Who ever heard of someone’s being condemned for healing a cripple? The Sanhedrin has placed itself in an indefensible and potentially embarrassing position.

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

But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council: Peter and John are taken outside of the assembly so the Sanhedrin may privately discuss the dilemma they face.
they conferred among themselves: Would it not be interesting to know what was said by this august body behind closed doors? They are in a desperate situation to save face. It is obvious they are destitute of charges against Peter and John, but now they are simply grasping for a reason for the arrest and stalling for time.

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

Saying, What shall we do to these men: Here Luke allows us some insight into this confidential discussion. Some commentators have discussed how Luke could have known what these Jewish judges are saying in private. They, as many commentators are prone to do, are overlooking the obvious: Luke is speaking by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. God supplies Luke with this otherwise privy information (2 Timothy 3:16).

for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it: Here are facts the Sanhedrin must deal with:

1. "... a notable miracle hath been done."
2. "by them," that is Peter and John.
3. "...is manifest (visible) to all."
4. "...we cannot deny it."

It is sad that this group, when confronted with this undeniable evidence, does not ask "what must I do to be saved"; instead, their only concern is how to stop these men from preaching "in the name of Jesus." It is obvious by their admission, "we cannot deny it," they would have denied it if they could have.
17 But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name.

But that it spread no further among the people: It is obvious the Sanhedrin is not concerned with truth; rather their primary objective is to stamp out the teaching of Jesus Christ. They look at this popular new faith as a strike at their very existence, and rightly so.

let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name: A threat is the best they can do at this time. It would be contrary to popular opinion to use more stringent means against the apostles. It should be noted that members of the court make no specific charge because they do not have one; they simply resort to intimidation.

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

And they called them: The apostles have been waiting to hear the results of this private session of the court. Now they are brought in to hear the weighty decision arrived at by the Jews.

and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus: The apostles are prohibited "to speak" or "to teach." By using both "speak" and "teach." the command is emphasized. Literally, they are not to allow the "name of Jesus" to escape their mouths under any circumstance.
This is the first time in the history of the church that preaching was forbidden; and now it was forbidden absolutely. If the apostles obey, not another word is to be spoken for Jesus in public or private. We shudder to think of the consequences if that injunction had been obeyed (McGarvey, Vol. I 74).

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

But Peter and John answered and said unto them: If the Jews think this threat will seal the lips of Peter and John, they have vastly underestimated the convictions of these two witnesses for Jesus. The council is quickly informed by both Peter and John that they "hearken" to God, not to men.

Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye: The divinely inspired apostles, in a brilliant stroke of judicial logic, reverse the situation on the Sanhedrin. Is it more important to serve God or to serve man? "Judge ye." Even this prejudiced court knows the right answer (see notes on 5:29).

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

If Peter and John had been concerned for their personal safety, they could have remained silent, but as McGarvey says, "silence might have been construed as giving assent; and the apostles were too candid to allow it to be thought for a moment that assent would be given" (Vol. I 74).
The testimony of Jesus is as a burning ember in the hearts of Peter and John. They could not "but speak the things" they "have seen and heard." Regardless of the dictates of the Supreme Court, the apostles are going to preach Jesus!

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

So when they had further threatened them: It must have been a blow to the ego of the haughty Sanhedrin Court to be unable to strike fear into the hearts of humble men like Peter and John. In the face of defiance from the apostles, the court continues to threaten them with the consequences of preaching Jesus. It should be understood these are not idle threats. Soon the pent up fury of the Jews will take a physical toll on the apostles. They are arrested and beaten (5:40), and later Stephen is stoned to death for preaching Jesus (7:58-59).

There is a progression in this inspired history toward that murderous fury which at last signaled official Israel's total rejection of Jesus Christ. For the moment, the popularity of the apostles with the people prevented all but the threats (Coffman 92).

ey let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: In reality, there are no real violations of the law committed by the apostles. The Jews, in hopes of finding some charge against Peter and John, come up short in their accusations. The real problem has nothing to do with the healing of the crippled man; the real problem for the Jews is how to stop the apostles from boldly preaching Jesus Christ, especially the affirmation of His resurrection. The arrest of Peter and John is a serious mistake for the Jews. Now extra attention has been focused upon this "new sect," and it has come out the winner. The apostles have become folk heroes in that "little David" has stood up to Goliath and won again!
Because of this popular response of the common people, the apostles are spared any further harassment at this time.

_for all men glorified God for that which was done_: The people in general praise God for the miracle that has been performed. This is an indication that the people believe the miracle to be genuine and are grateful for this display of the mercy of God. Even the jaundiced eye of the Sanhedrin does not question the authenticity of the miracle.

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

Luke, forever showing his training as a physician, tells the age of the man. The indication is since the man is "above forty years old," the healing is not one to be naturally expected. All hope of healing by ordinary means is exhausted. This miracle is the result of the power of God in the "name of Jesus."

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

_And being let go, they went to their own company_: When it is determined that nothing else can be done to the apostles, they are set free.

_and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them_: Peter and John return to the disciples and give a blow-by-blow report of their trial. This encounter with the enemies of Jesus is a victory for Christianity.
Having been threatened by the hierarchy, the apostles might have been expected, by those who threatened, to flee from the area; but instead, they, together with the whole Christian community, went to their knees in prayer to Almighty God. No, they would not flee—yet. The battle for the soul of secular Israel would be continued for forty years; then the Christians would flee from Jerusalem, and the accumulated wrath of centuries would humble forever that city which rejected Jesus (Coffman 93).

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

And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God: When the disciples hear of the success of the apostles in their defense before the Sanhedrin, they praise God in unison. We should note the early Christians resort to prayer whenever crisis arises; they always remember to thank God when the danger passes.

with one accord: This phrase is used twelve times in the New Testament. Eleven of the twelve are found in the book of Acts. This phrase stresses the idea of unity in the Lord’s church and reveals one of the reasons for the great success of Christianity in the first century.

and said, Lord, thou art God: The disciples address their prayer to God whom they recognize as "Lord" or Master. They acknowledge God as the unlimited power of all creation. Vine defines the Greek word Despotes ("Lord") as a master, lord, one who possesses supreme authority...” (Vol. III 18).
which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: God is remembered by the disciples as the Creator of all things. The Christian in trouble can find great consolation and encouragement in knowing his heavenly Father the God he worships, is the supreme Sovereign of the universe. There is strength in knowing God is still in control of the world regardless of the turmoil and problems that may come our way (Genesis 1:1; Nehemiah 9:6; Acts 14:15; Colossians 1:16).

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

Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said: The apostles understand that David spoke the following words by inspiration from God (Psalm 2:1-2).

Why did the heathen rage: "Heathen" refers to any nation other than the Jews. The prophecy of David foretells the opposition of the "heathen" to Christianity. Vincent says in regard to the word "rage": "Only here in New Testament. Originally, to neigh or snort like a horse. Of men, to give one's self haughty airs, and to act and speak insolently" (466).

and the people: The "people" describe those among the Jews who "raged" against Jesus; therefore, both Jew and Gentile "raged" against Christ.

imagine: "The word, imagine, does not express quite the force of the original. The Hebrew and the Greek both convey the idea of meditating, thinking, purposing. It means they employed thought, plan, purpose, in opposing the Messiah" (Barnes 406).
vain things: The word "vain" means empty (Vine Vol. IV 181). The "heathen" devise a plan to oppose Christianity, but the plan is empty, useless; God would establish His kingdom regardless of the efforts to oppose it.

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

The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers: David continues his prophecy with the information that "kings" and "rulers" will rise in opposition to God and Jesus. This prophecy is fulfilled in part by King Herod and Governor Pilate in the part they play in opposition to Jesus. It must also include the Sanhedrin Court in their relentless persecution of Christianity.

were gathered together: Literally, these "kings" and "rulers" work in concert in opposition to the plan of God. Historically, the opposition to Christianity has made strange bedfellows. Jews and Gentiles who normally have no use for each other join forces to oppose Jesus. Politics and religion, usually kept strictly separated, join hands to oppose Jesus. Religious sects, ordinarily at each others throats, pool their cunning to oppose Jesus. Even in modern time, religious groups lay aside their denominational differences and join forces to oppose the truth.

against the Lord: In the Hebrew, the text says "against Jehovah. This is the peculiar name which is given in the Scriptures to God" (Barnes 406).
and against his Christ: David, in the second Psalm, uses the term "Christ" ("Anointed"). In the Hebrew, the meaning is "Messiah" or "Anointed." This is one of the few places in the Old Testament where the word "Messiah" is used. The obvious meaning is: one who is opposed to Christ is also opposed to God.

He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me (Luke 10:16).

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

Luke further explains the Psalm by saying, truly or in reality, these (Herod, Pilate, etc.) are the perpetrators of this conspiracy against Jesus. Although this is an unlikely group to "gather together," when it comes to their common enemy, "the holy child Jesus," they work together.

Regarding the question of why the mighty men such as rulers and kings and priests would with nearly unanimous hatred of the Christ unite their efforts to oppose and destroy Jesus and his teaching, the reason for it was deeply embedded in human nature. The Jewish rulers are mortified, disgusted and outraged that one so poor and lowly would claim to be the messiah. Their pride, ambition and selfishness simply could not accept Jesus as the fulfillment of an expectation they have so long cherished of some spectacular leader on a white horse who would overthrow the power of Rome and restore the defunct Solomonic empire. In the case of the Romans, human nature at last turned upon the new faith with the fury of a vicious animal; and, although at first not opposed to Christianity (because they did not understand it), when it finally became clear to Roman authorities the new religion is not merely seeking a place along with
other religions, but is exclusive in its claims, the Gentile authorities launched the great persecutions in the hope of exterminating Christianity (Coffman 95).

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

This is one of those most difficult concepts for human minds to attempt to understand. Here is some of the "hidden wisdom" that Paul speaks about when he tells how God "ordained" the salvation of men through the sacrifice of Jesus (1 Corinthians 2:7-8). All things that transpire in the crucifixion of Jesus, the conspiracy of both Jews and Gentiles in their opposition to Christianity and the general persecutions of Christians, are foreordained and orchestrated by the will of God. Coffman says:

There are mysteries here beyond any complete human understanding of them; but any solution of the problem must take account of the freedom of the human will, either to obey or disobey God. Any resolution of the question that denies such freedom must be rejected" (95).

God desires the salvation of mankind. To accomplish this goal, according to His plan, it required the use of wicked men as instruments of fulfillment. Although these wicked men were players in the fulfillment of the divine plan, they still had the will to choose. It must be emphasized that they chose to be in opposition to the plan of God. Judas is a prime example; he, of his own free will, chose to betray Jesus. This idea should not be a stumbling block to the mind of a Christian. We should simply give thanks for the infinite wisdom of God, as the disciples do.

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! (Romans 11:33).
29 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word,

And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: It is a comfort to Christians to know that the God "who made heaven, and earth" is aware of their problems.

and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word: These disciples are praying that the apostles will continue to have "boldness" when they preach God’s word. Peter and John have just demonstrated the effectiveness of bold preaching. We should be praying for bold preachers today!

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

In addition to the "boldness" necessary to preach against opposition, the disciples also ask God to continue to confirm their preaching with miraculous signs. Miraculous signs serve this purpose: the apostles could go to a strange city where no one knows them and preach the gospel. But who will believe they are truly from God? They will then perform a miracle, such as opening the eyes of a blind man or healing a cripple. Now who can deny they are messengers from God? The working of the miracles places a divine stamp of approval upon the testimony of the apostle.

The purpose of the miracle is to confirm the testimony of the apostles. Today’s would-be miracle workers have this process in reverse. They work a supposed miracle and then call for testimony to prove their miracle (Hebrews 1:4; Mark 16:17) (see notes on 2:17)!
And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together: Almost before the prayer is finished, the God "which hast made heaven and earth" shakes His creation in affirmation that He hears the petition of His saints. This visible sign gives assurance that His promise of miraculous power to the Twelve will continue.

and they: To whom does the pronoun "they" refer? In verse 29 Luke explains the thrust of this prayer is to petition God to "grant unto thy servants," that with all boldness "they" (thy servants, the apostles) may continue to preach the word "with all boldness." The conclusion is that this company of disciples is praying for the apostles.

were all filled with the Holy Ghost: This is not a repetition of the reception of the Spirit as in chapter two verse 4, but rather the apostles receive a continuation of the power "from on high" (Luke 24:49; 2:4).

and they spake the word of God with boldness: The prayer of the disciples is answered immediately. They request to be able to "speak thy word with all boldness"; now they are doing just that.
32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

And the multitude of them that believed: Since the beginning of the Lord's church on Pentecost, the Bible commentary has centered our attention on the lives of Peter and John as they begin the initial preaching of the gospel. Now the scene shifts to the internal condition of the church as a whole. Luke will now describe how this unique situation among the brethren establishes the grounds for the happenings to Ananias and Sapphira.

were of one heart and of one soul: By this time the disciples of Christ number several thousand. They are all in and around Jerusalem because as of yet they have not been scattered. It is remarkable that this vast company of saints are of "one heart and one soul."

neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common: This teaching does not indicate that the private ownership of property or possessions has been terminated, but, rather, as a result of the vast number of Christians in Jerusalem, the brethren who have possessions sell them for the relief of the needy.

It should be remembered that a great company of Jews had assembled in Jerusalem for the Passover, and then remained over for the Pentecost feast. They brought possessions enough to last them until this feast had passed. But many of them had been converted and continued their sojourn in Jerusalem until their supply had been exhausted. They were now new creatures in Christ; they had begun a new life; they had new hopes and new purposes; they had not learned the full meaning of Christianity. Some of them were in need, not because they had been idle, neither because they had
squandered their possessions, nor yet because they were shiftless; but their means had been exhausted and they now were in need. In this emergency those who had possessions were ready to distribute as each had need. There is no "communism" practiced here; there was no denial of property rights, nor an encouragement to idleness; but an emergency had arisen and they had enough of the spirit of Christ to supply the needs of those who were in distress (Boles 76).

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

And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: As noted in verse 31 the apostles are preaching with a renewed fervor. It is also important to notice that the unity and benevolence of the early Christians amplify the effectiveness of the message of the apostles.

It has been often observed since then that when unity and liberality prevail in a congregation the preaching has greater power because of its greater favor with the people; whereas, in the absence of unity and liberality, the most forcible preaching often fails of visible results (McGarvey, Vol. I 80).

and great grace was upon them all: God richly blesses their efforts. This fledgling church is able to accomplish a task that has never been duplicated. They take the gospel to "the whole world" in less than thirty years (Romans 10:18).
Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,

Neither was there any among them that lacked: It must be noted the needy are the subject of this liberality. This is not an effort, as some suggest, to level the economic playing field among the disciples. McGarvey makes this comment:

The church was not at this time a commune, or a socialistic club, as many interpreters have fancied. There was no uniform distribution, of the property of all among the members; neither was the property of all held and administered by the apostles (Vol. I 80).

for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold: Those disciples who have possessions sell portions of their goods to benefit their needy brethren. There is no indication of a universal selling of all worldly possessions nor is there indication that instructions are issued encouraging members to distribute to the poor all they own. This benevolence is prompted by the love of the brethren for each other.

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

The money thus collected is entrusted to the wisdom of the apostles for "distribution." The church at Jerusalem has thus established an example for the care of needy saints. The church at Antioch will soon follow this example (11:28-30).
36 And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus,

And Joses: Luke selects Joses or Joseph as an example of the benevolent brethren just referred to.

who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas: The giving of surnames to express character is a common practice. This same Barnabas will soon become a distinguished preacher and the traveling companion of the Apostle Paul.

(which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,): "Barnabas" is derived from two Hebrew words that mean "son of teaching" or "preaching"; the two Greek words, here translated "son of consolation," may also mean "son of preaching or exhortation" (Boles 76).

a Levite: Barnabas is of the priestly tribe of Levi.

and of the country of Cyprus: Barnabas is a native of the small island of Cyprus, located off the southern coast of Asia Minor in the Mediterranean Sea.

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

Barnabas is used as an example by Luke to demonstrate the usual process employed in the contribution for the needy saints. With this understanding, we are ready for the revealing of the ill-conceived scheme devised by Ananias and Sapphira.
Chapter 5

This chapter immediately takes us into the consequences of the conspiracy perpetrated by Ananias and Sapphira. We quickly learn the value of swift and sure discipline in the Lord's church. The chapter records the continuing success of the preaching of the gospel, the relentless opposition of the Sanhedrin, and finally a plot to kill all of the apostles.

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

But a certain man: This is one of those places in the scriptures where the decision to divide the text for a new chapter is unfortunate. Some of the force of what occurs is lost. Luke has related a contrast between a good deed, in the case of Barnabas, and the dark side of human nature with the account of Ananias and Sapphira. By beginning the account with the conjunction "but," it is obvious these two illustrations are meant to be contrasted.

named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife: The moral character of this husband and wife certainly does not come up to the standards indicated by their names. The first of these names means "Jehovah hath been gracious," and "If Sapphira is Greek, it means sapphire; if Aramaic, it means beautiful. How tragic is the contrast between these lovely names and what befell those who wore them"(Coffman101). The words "with Sapphira his wife" indicate they are co-conspirators in the lie they attempt to perpetrate.

sold a possession: Ananias and his wife follow the lead of Barnabas in that they also sell "a possession," which we soon learn is a piece of land.
2 And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

**And kept back part of the price:** It should be understood that Ananias has every right to keep as much of the "price" as he so desires. Peter states this point in verse 4. Their initial sin is in pretending to give more than they actually do, and, as usually is the case when sin takes its course in our lives, they have to further support their pretense with a lie.

It is interesting to note this is the first sin recorded against a member of the church. They were not willing to make the real sacrifice. They lied about their good deed. The sin was twofold: the love of the praise of men and the love of money. No doubt those noble souls who sold that which was theirs for the help of others were admired by those of the church. This was what Ananias and Sapphira wanted, but they were not willing to obtain it through unselfish effort (De Welt 73).

**his wife also being privy to it:** Sapphira is not innocent in this fraud: she is as guilty as Ananias.

**and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet:** Ananias brings "a certain part" of the money produced by the sale of the land and presents it to the apostles as if this amount were the total purchase price.
3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?

But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart: Peter, led by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, knows of the hypocrisy of Ananias. Peter also recognizes that Satan is the father of all liars. From the beginning Satan lied to Eve; here he inspires this deception in Ananias. We must never forget Satan is the arch deceiver, the adversary who spends every second of every day in an endless pursuit of souls (Genesis 3:1-5; John 8:44; 1 Peter 5:8).

We do know that Ananias permitted Satan to fill his heart; Ananias was held responsible for what he did, and therefore, he permitted Satan to prompt him to do the evil. There seems to be an inspiration of the devil as well as an inspiration of the Holy Spirit. We may infer here that Satan is a real being acting upon and influencing men to do evil; that Ananias had the power to resist Satan's influence, or he should not have been punished (Boles 78).

to lie to the Holy Ghost: What a truly grievous sin in the sight of God is man's attempt to deceive the Holy Ghost. This narrative emphasizes the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit in each Christian and the grave implications into which we enter when we try to deceive Him.

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are (1 Corinthians 3:16-17).

and to keep back part of the price of the land: This is the sin of Ananias and Sapphira: they keep part of the money gained from the sale of the land but pretend to give the total price of the sale to aid the needy.
4 Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power: There is no command to sell all or even a portion of their possessions. There was no command to give all or even a portion of the sale price to the church. Ananias simply uses this situation as an opportunity to gain man's praise in a deceitful way.

why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart: Satan is the "father of liars," but the final choice to sin or not to sin lies within the power of the individual. The excuse, "the devil made me do it," is no excuse; the free agency of man must be recognized. Satan has no power over us without our cooperation.

thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God: Again, the gravity of their sin is named. The overwhelming point of Peter's accusation is not that they have lied to men, but they have lied to God.

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

And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: When Peter exposes the hypocrisy of Ananias, Ananias drops dead. There is no hint that Peter struck Ananias dead or even that Peter is expecting such an event. It is obvious this is an act of divine judgment against Ananias that fully displays the severity of God. Coffman says:
Peter’s rebuke of Ananias was administered in the Holy Spirit; and there is not the slightest hint that Peter struck Ananias dead, or even that God had told Peter that such a thing would occur. Like the shaking of the house when they all prayed (4:31), this was something God did independently of any apostolic volition (104).

and great fear came on all them that heard these things: There is some discussion today as to whether God is actually responsible for the death of Ananias or perhaps this is some natural occurrence. This is ridiculous to even speculate upon. The problem is that men do not like the idea of dealing with a God who might slay them, much less punish them everlastingly. Man has lost his fear and respect of God. If we could speak to the people of Noah's day (Genesis 7) or Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:1-2) or Achan (Joshua 7:16-26) or a host of others who felt the severity of God, we would know whom to fear! The account just related should correct man’s shortsighted view of Almighty God. The death of Ananias certainly seems to have the desired effect upon these early disciples. In a very graphic way, they have seen the futility and consequences of trying to deceive God.

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

And the young men arose: The responsibility for burial of Ananias is assumed by the younger men of the congregation.

wound him up: Barnes describes the process of burial preparation. "It was the usual custom with the Jews to wind the body up in many folds of linen before it was buried; commonly also with spices, to preserve it from putrefaction" (410).
and carried him out, and buried him: There is no fanfare in the burial of Ananias. He has received a divine judgment because of his sin, and he is afforded no special treatment in his burial. Apparently, Sapphira, the wife of Ananias, is not notified of the death of her husband.

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

One can only imagine the tension that builds while the disciples wait for the appearance of Sapphira. If the apostles are shocked at the fate of Ananias, they now must be aware of the dreadful consequences that await his wife if she is party to this deceit.

It is also quite amazing to contemplate that she is kept unaware of her husband's death. He has dropped dead in a public place and has been carried out to be buried. Three hours passed and yet Sapphira has not heard one word about the incident. This is a most extraordinary circumstance, yet we may assume these details are kept from Sapphira in order that she might be tested, and if guilty, exposed for her part in the scheme.

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

And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much: By the time Sapphira arrives, it is likely the tension in the air could have been cut with a knife. Peter breaks the silence with the straightforward question, "Did you sell the land for so much?"

And she said, Yea, for so much: Without hesitation, Sapphira confirms her complicity in this attempt to lie unto God.
9 Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out.

Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord: Peter delivers essentially the same rebuke to Sapphira that he gave to her husband in verse 3. Peter uses three different expressions to describe the sin of Ananias and Sapphira: "lie to the Holy Ghost" (verse 3), “lied ... unto God” (verse 4), and "tempt the Spirit of the Lord” (verse 9).

If the guilty pair had been asked, beforehand, whether they thought they could deceive the Holy Spirit, no doubt they would have answered, no: for they must have known that such an attempt would be in vain. They dared to make the attempt because they had their minds on the apostles as men, and not as inspired men. The test thus unintentionally applied resulted in a triumphant vindication of the Spirit's power as an indwelling guide, and the circumstances were such that no man could dare to repeat the experiment (McGarvey, Vol. I 87).

behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out: The footsteps of the young brethren, returning from the burial of Ananias, are heard at the door. They soon shall be the bearers of the body of Sapphira.
10 Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband.

Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: Again it is necessary to state that even though Peter knows what is going to happen, he does not cause the death of Sapphire. Her death, like the death of Ananias, is brought about by the swift judgment of God.

and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband: The same young brethren who buried Ananias now carry out the body of Sapphira to be buried next to her husband.

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

And great fear came upon all: To miss the lesson taught, as a result of the sin and punishment of Ananias and Sapphira, would be to fail to appreciate the example that God makes of these two who would "tempt the Spirit of the Lord." The church of the first century learns in a very graphic way:

1) God searches the hearts of men.
2) God judges the motives of men.
3) Fraud and hypocrisy will be detected.
4) God's judgments are swift and severe.

the church: Here, for the first time in the original text of the book of Acts, the word *ekklesia*, from which we get the word "church," is used. Vine defines the word *ekklesia* as from *ek*, out of, and *klesis*, a calling (Vol. I 83). Literally the "church" is the "called out" (Matthew 16:18; Acts 7:38; 8:3).
The "church," the "called out of God," was established on the day of Pentecost (2:47). The church of Christ became then an undeniable reality upon the earth. The prediction of Jesus, "upon this rock I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18), was fulfilled.

**and upon as many as heard these things:** The community in general, both believers and non-believers, were duly impressed by this demonstration of the power of God. We dare not miss the lesson of Ananias and Sapphira. McGarvey aptly sums up this account with the following quotation:

> We must not drop this incident without observing its bearing in another direction. This piece of corruption was connected with the Lord’s treasury; and apart from the feature which was emphasized by Peter, it has a bearing on our modern church life. The lie told by Ananias consisted in representing his gift as being more liberal in proportion to his ability than it really was. Every time a member of the church at the present day makes exaggerated statements of the amount he is giving, or understates the amount of his wealth, in order to make out a degree of liberality beyond what is real, he is guilty of the sin of Ananias and Sapphira; and if all such were to drop dead in their tracks, there would be a thinning of the ranks in some places. All who are tempted to act thus should be faithfully notified that the same God who punished Ananias and Sapphira on the spot will not fail to punish, in his own time and place, all who imitate them (Vol. I 87-88).
12 And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch.

And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people: The testimony of the apostles is confirmed as being from God by the miracles that accompany their preaching. By the demonstration of "signs and wonders," the gospel is given divine impetus (see notes on 4:30).

The recurrence of the phrase, "by the apostles" or "by the hands of the apostles," affords positive proof that the one hundred twenty disciples mentioned in the first chapter had no part in the baptism of the Holy Spirit which endowed the Twelve with the fantastic powers visible in the Book of Acts (Coffman 108).

(and they were all with one accord: Luke never misses an opportunity to emphasize the unity of the brotherhood of Christians (see notes on 1:14).

in Solomon's porch: This "porch" is an appendix to the temple (see notes on 3:11).

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

And of the rest: There is some discussion as to whom "the rest" might be. Some suggest they are the non-Christian population in general, but, as we see in the next verse, "multitudes" of the general population are being "added to the Lord." "The rest" refers to a definite portion of the population, specifically those who see the possibility of personal jeopardy if they fall into the same consequences that befell Ananias and Sapphria. The fate of Ananias has a pronounced effect on those who, perhaps, have the same hypocritical tendencies. "The rest" is
defined by Vincent as: "Unbelievers, deterred by the fate of Ananias from uniting themselves to the church under false pretences" (468).

**durst no man join himself to them:** Because of the example of Ananias, "no man" with like motives dared to "join himself" to the church.

**but the people magnified them:** The general population is greatly impressed by this example of discipline in the church. Vine says this word "magnified" means "to make great" (Vol. III 28). The Lord's church is great in the sight of the ordinary people.

Usually, in our modern experience, a great sin exposed in the church, such as that of Ananias and Sapphira, brings the church into disrepute for a time, diminishes the respect for it entertained in the community, and renders all efforts to add to its numbers futile. Why was the effect in Jerusalem the reverse of this? This is a serious question for those who bear rule in the church. It is quite evident that the difference depends on the very different way in which such scandalous conduct is now treated. If the Jerusalem church had tolerated Ananias and Sapphira, by retaining them in their fellowship after their exposure, doubtless the "ways of Zion would have mourned," and sinners would not have been turned to the Lord. But the sudden punishment visited upon them by the Lord, and the abhorrence of the deed manifested by burying them without ceremony in the clothing in which they died, and while their bodies were scarcely cold, made the whole community feel that here was a people among whom sin could not be tolerated. It was a safe place for a man who needed holy companionship to help him in the effort to live a holy life—a place in which he might expect every false step to be promptly corrected, and through which he might confidently hope to make his pilgrimage to a better world. People who wish to make a compromise with sin, and who join a church merely because they are afraid to live without some appearance of
religion, will always avoid such a church as their spiritual home. When shall the rigid
discipline which God established in the beginning be seen on earth once more? Let the
shepherds of the flock give an answer, as they remember that they must give account to
God concerning the souls committed to their care (McGarvey, Vol.I 89-90).

The world will always "magnify" a church that stands uncompromisingly for truth and holy lives.
It is "high time" for the church of today to take a stand for truth and to demand moral, virtuous
lives from its members. While church leaders timidly stand by in indecision on discipline, the
Lord's church is being ravaged by adultery, fornication, unscriptural divorces, immodesty,
covetousness, and a host of other sins that dilute and make ineffectual the lives of Christians.
The church needs to realize the value of swift decisive discipline as well as the sometimes
irreparable harm done by a lack of discipline. The problems that arise within the Lord's church
do not go away on their own: they must be dealt with. When the church ceases to be a
proclaimer of truth, a fortress for morality, and an enforcer of discipline, it becomes a
laughingstock.

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

And believers were the more added to the Lord: Sincere "believers" are "added to the Lord"
which is the same as "added to the church" (see notes on 2:47). The discipline invoked by the
Apostle Peter may have intimidated some with hypocritical motives, but it inspires the pure of
heart to become members of this righteous group. If the church is to be successful in the role
of evangelism, it must maintain its integrity.

multitudes both of men and women): This is no small event; large numbers are influenced
to obey the gospel.
15 Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.

Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches: This verse refers to verse 12 and is a continuation of the activities recorded there. Through the power vested in the apostles by the Holy Spirit, many are being healed.

that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them: Whether or not the "shadow of Peter passing" over the sick heals them would be mere conjecture on our part because the scriptures do not explain. The people seem to think such a miracle might happen, and it certainly is not an impossible concept. The woman in Matthew 9:21 thinks, "If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole." In Acts 19:12, it is expressly stated the sick are healed by the "handkerchiefs or aprons" that are brought from the Apostle Paul.

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

There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: Just as the common people have flocked to Jesus for His healing, they now come to the Twelve for the benefits of their miraculous power. Doubtless many of these are converted to Christianity; thus, the spread of the gospel continues (see notes on "unclean spirits" in Acts 8:7).
and they were healed every one: No one is disappointed; "they were healed every one."
This is quite a contrast to the would-be "faith healers" of today, where failure is common and
the cure is questionable.

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

Then the high priest rose up: As if they could sit still no longer, the enemies of Jesus once
again rear their ugly heads to oppose the apostles.

and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled
with indignation: When Peter and John stood before the Sanhedrin (4:20), they had promised
to disobey the charge given them, not to speak any more in the name of Jesus. They continue
to preach the gospel, giving emphasis to the resurrection of Jesus (4:33). This teaching
always upset the Sadducees. "The Sadducees saw in Christ's resurrection the refutation of
their system; and therefore they violently seized the apostles, because their preaching that
doctrine was fatal to their distinguishing tenets (Campbell 33).

18 And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison.
Peter and John again become prisoners for the cause of Christ, but this time they have
company in this "common" jail; all twelve of the apostles are imprisoned.

When man has reached his extremity, then it is that there is afforded to God an
opportunity. The extremity had been reached. An emergency had arisen. What would
have happened to the cause if all twelve of the apostles had been tried and
condemned? This was exactly the plan of the Sanhedrin, not to stop with two of them,
but to silence all twelve once and for all (De Welt 78).
19 But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said,

**But the angel of the Lord:** The word "angel" is defined by Vine as "a messenger (form *angello*, to deliver a message) sent whether by God or by man or by Satan" (Vol. I 155). In this case, we have no problem in understanding this is a heavenly messenger from God; it is the "angel of the Lord." The scriptures explain that one of the functions of these heavenly messengers is to be "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation" (Hebrews 1:14). God, in this place, uses one of these "ministering spirits" to carry out His providence for the apostles. God is still in control of this world, and there is no reason not to assume that His will is still being accomplished by these "ministering spirits."

**by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said:** In the night one of God's mighty angels throws open the prison doors, doors that are locked only to the power of men. This is not the last time we will encounter the "angel of the Lord" in the book of Acts (8:26; 12:7; 12:23).

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

It is difficult to imagine the amazement of the Twelve as they are led out of the "common prison" into the night by this angel. The reason for this angelic rescue becomes apparent in the instruction of the angel. Go preach the "words of life." God is not about to allow this harassment and incarceration to hinder the progress of the gospel. All the opposition that Satan can muster will be frustrated in his attempts to prevent the preaching of "the words of life."
21 And when they heard that, they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught. But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.

And when they heard that, they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught:
The apostles waste no time in discharging the instructions of the angel. "As the sun breaks over the eastern horizon of the hills of Judea the apostles entered the familiar portico of the temple to take up their message where it had been interrupted the day before (De Welt 79).

But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel: The "high priest" reassembles the Sanhedrin court to determine what is to be done with the prisoners. Luke uses the word "senate" to describe one group of those that gathered. The word "senate" (gerousia) means "a council of elders" (Vine, Vol. III 342).

and sent to the prison to have them brought: Men are dispatched to the prison to fetch the disciples who, unbeknown to this assembly of hostile Jews, are no longer prisoners. They are busily doing what they were commanded not to do, preaching the "words of life."
22 But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison, they returned, and told,
23 Saying, The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors: but when we had opened, we found no man within.

The officers of the court must have been surprised to find the doors of the prison locked and guarded; yet upon investigation the prisoners are absent. Often death is the penalty for the jailor if his prisoners escape. Being a jailor is an especially risky business if the charges happen to be Christians (Acts 16:27).

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

Now when the high priest and the captain of the temple and the chief priests: See notes on chapter four verse 1.

heard these things: The leaders of the Sanhedrin receive the report that the apostles have been miraculously freed from the prison.

they doubted of them whereunto this would grow: Herein is an amazing thing. These Jews are not "perplexed" over the fact that the disciples have escaped, but, rather, their concern is what effect this latest victory for the apostles will have in aiding the rapid growth and popularity of the Lord's church. These Jewish officials have had every opportunity to see the validity of the Christian faith in many different miracles, signs and wonders, yet they steadfastly refuse to acknowledge the truth.
25 Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people.

It is bound to be obvious to the Jewish Sanhedrin that these disciples of the despised "Jesus of Nazareth" are not easily intimidated, neither are they going away. The threat of the Sanhedrin to "speak no more in the name of Jesus" (4:18) and the night in jail seem to have inspired the apostles to a new urgency in "teaching the people." This opposition ignited their zeal like pouring gasoline on a fire. Perhaps some opposition would be good for the church of today. Have we become complacent about the preaching of the gospel? Because we are rarely challenged regarding our faith today, have we forgotten our purpose? Could it be the devil has changed his tactics? Has he learned that he can love more folks into hell than he can drive there?

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

These Jewish authorities have had prior dealings with these men before. Now they are sent again to "lay hands on the apostles" and bring them before the Sanhedrin. There is bound to be a new appreciation for the status of the apostles; at least it is obvious that popular opinion is on their side. The captain and his officers are the ones who must exercise caution lest they stir up the ire of the people and wind up being stoned themselves!
27 And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them,
28 Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.

And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them, Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name: Once again the apostles are brought before the council and the original charge is reiterated: "they commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus" (4:18). "This strict charge, on the part of the council, shows how much they dreaded the name of Jesus Christ" (Campbell 35).

and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine: What a great commentary on the tenacity and convictions of the apostles! They have "filled Jerusalem" with the gospel of Christ.

and intend to bring this man's blood upon us: This is the second of two charges brought by the Sanhedrin. First, the apostles violated the command of the court not to preach, and now they are accused of blaming the Sanhedrin for the death of Jesus. What a hypocritical charge! The blood of Jesus is already upon them. This is the same court that condemned Jesus to die and then asked Pilate to agree to allow it. These are some of the same people who cried out "His blood be on us and on our children" (Matthew 27:25). This venomous clamor for the blood of Jesus will haunt some of these men in eternity.
29 Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said: As is usually the case, Peter seems to be the spokesman for the disciples.

We ought to obey God rather than men: Without hesitation "Peter and the other apostles" plead guilty to the charges of the court. Their excuse, for a violation of the dictates of this "supreme court," is "we ought to obey God rather than men."

Here is a principle that should be remembered by all Christians: if the demands of civil government, society, tyrannical dictators, or whoever it might be, cause the compromise or violation of Christian commands and principles, these demands must be disregarded. God must be put first.

Here Peter, as in Acts 4:19 states the principle that should govern all Christians. When there is a conflict between the authority of God and men, we must obey God; God comes first; obedience to his authority takes precedence over all other authorities (Boles 89).

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

The God of our fathers raised up Jesus: Peter draws a sharp contrast between the actions of God and of men. Jesus, whom God "raised up," they killed on the cross. Peter never passes the opportunity to declare, for the benefit of the unbelieving Sadducees, the resurrection of Jesus.
whom ye slew: The guilt for the death of Jesus lies upon the shoulders of these Jews. "It is certain, however, that Peter did not shrink from charging them with their guilt; nor was he at any pains to soften or mitigate the severe charge that they had murdered their own Messiah" (Barnes 413).

and hanged on a tree: To hang "on a tree" is to crucify. Vine defines "tree" as: "(xulon), wood, a piece of wood, anything made of wood is used, with the rendering "tree," ... (b) of the Cross, the tree being the stauros, the upright pale or stake to which Romans nailed those who were thus to be executed" (Vol. IV 153). (See 10:39; 13:29; Galatians 3:13; 1 Peter 2:24.)

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

Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour: Peter continues to describe what God has done for the “Messiah” whom they have rejected. Boles defines "A Prince," as having authority and so must be obeyed; he has all authority in heaven and on earth; as a Savior to those only who accept him as their Lord" (89) (see notes on 3:15).

for to give repentance to Israel: One might be led to believe that "repentance" is something that one gets, but we have already learned "repentance" is something one does (see notes on 2:38). The concept thus presented is that the “goodness of God” would provide an opportunity for Israel to repent (Romans 2:4; 2 Corinthians 7:10).
It is implied that repentance as well as remission of sins is a gift; but to give repentance cannot mean to bestow it without an exercise of our own will; for repentance itself is an act of our will. It is an act of the will to which we are led by sorrow for sin. God gives it then, not directly, but indirectly, by giving the motives which lead to it (McGarvey, Vol. I 95-96).

T. W. Brents in his classic book, *The Gospel Plan of Salvation*, makes the following observation:

God gives us bread, but we have to work and make it nevertheless. So God gives us repentance by placing motives before us to induce it; hence Paul asks: "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance" (197)?

and forgiveness of sins: Jesus has been resurrected from the grave and exalted to the "right hand of God" to be the Savior for those who will obey Him and receive the remission of sins (Matthew 7:21; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Hebrews 5:8-9).

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

And we are his witnesses of these things: Peter declares himself and the rest of the apostles as "witnesses" of these things that happened to Jesus (see notes on 1:8-9).

and so is also the Holy Ghost: Additional credibility is added by Peter when he says the "Holy Ghost" is also a "witness" of these things. The insinuation is if our testimony about Jesus is wrong; is the witness of the Holy Spirit wrong also?
**whom God hath given to them that obey him:** This statement is not to be understood as limited only to the apostles, but it reestablishes the general principle that God’s Holy Spirit is "given to them that obey him" (see extensive notes on 2:38).

In both the Greek and the English languages this principle of giving the Holy Spirit to the obedient is affirmed. In the Greek the word *edoken* (hath given) is third person plural, indicative active, aorist tense (The New Analytical Greek Lexicon 116). “Aorist tense denotes an action that is given in the past but can be continued and repeated” (Webster 84).

In the English, "hath" is present perfect tense. John E. Warriner says: “The present perfect tense is used to express action (or help to make a statement about something) occurring at no definite time in the past. It is formed with have or has. ... The present perfect tense is also used to express action (or help to make a statement about something) occurring in the past and continuing into the present” (165).

Coffman makes the following comment:

> In the history of holy truth, there has never been any such thing as God’s giving the Holy Spirit to men in order to make them obedient or to make them sons or to save them or to procure the remission of their sins or any such thing. On Pentecost, Peter commands believers to repent and be baptized with the promise that those who did so, receiving the remission of their sins subsequently to their obeying those commands, would also receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. "Obey," as used here, indicates "a lifelong obedience to God" is a continuing condition to be fulfilled by those desiring to enjoy the continuing gift of the Holy Spirit. See Galatians 4:6, where it is declared that the Holy Spirit is given to men, not to make them sons but as a consequence of their already being sons. The popular notion to the effect that God sends the Holy Spirit with the purpose of making men desire to serve God is totally wrong" (115).
33 When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them.

When they heard that: The apostles relentlessly and without compromise or apology have borne down on the Jews with the gospel of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Peter declares the merciless death brought upon Jesus by the Jews, His burial and glorious resurrection. Peter also calls for the repentance of Israel. It must have been incredulous to the minds of these "holier than thou" Jews to be commanded to repent. Basically, Peter's message is the same sermon he preached on the day of Pentecost in chapter two, but the results are vastly different.

they were cut to the heart: In chapter two the audience was "pricked in their hearts", here their hearts are "sawed asunder." "Only here and ch. vi1 54. The verb means, originally, to saw asunder. A strong figure for exasperation" (Vincent 471).

and took counsel to slay them: Members of this Jewish court are at their wits' end. They are so frustrated by the apostles that they are entertaining murderous thoughts. This should have been deja vu for this venomous crowd; this is the same state they were in when they crucified Jesus.

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

Then stood there up one in the council: One who is to have a calming influence on this exasperated council now takes the floor.

a Pharisee: The Pharisees are one of five major sects into which the Jewish people of New Testament times were divided.
In all probability the Pharisees originated in the period before the Maccabean war, in a reaction against the Hellenizing spirits which appeared among the Jews, and manifested itself in the readiness of a part of the people to adopt Greek customs. Those who regarded these hellenizing practices with abhorrence, and their spread with alarm, are incited to strict and open conformity to the Mosaic Law. They are driven yet more closely together as a party by the fierce persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanes, BC 175-163. Antiochus persecuted those faithful Israelites who would not abandon Judaism and accept the Greek faith. He attempted to destroy the Holy Scriptures, and commanded that whosoever was found with any Book of the Covenant, or consented to the Law, should be put to death, (1 Maccabees 1:56-57) (Reese 161).

In contrast to the Sadducees, the Pharisees believe in a resurrection, angels, and the immortality of the soul. The term "Pharisaism" is often applied to the legalistic tenants of this group. As Reese says:

Pharisaism is the final and necessary result of that conception of religion which makes religion consist of conformity to the Law. They thought that God promised grace only to the doers of the Law. Religion became external. The disposition of the heart was less vital than the outward act, in their estimation. The interpretation of the Law and its application to the details of ordinary life accordingly became a matter of grave consequences (162).

Like Gamaliel, the Apostle Paul was at one time a Pharisee (23:6). Paul says that the Pharisees are "the most straitest sect" of the Jewish religion (26:5).

**named Gamaliel:** This man is well known as a teacher of the Law.
Gamaliel was perhaps the foremost teacher in the sect of the Pharisees. He was quite literally "Mr. Pharisee" to the Jews of his day. "Dr. Lightfoot says, that this man was teacher of Paul, (Acts xxii, 3) the son of the Simon who took the Saviour in his arms, (Luke ii,) and the grandson of the famous Hillel, and was known among the Jews by the title of Rabban Gamaliel the elder. This man is said to have died eighteen years before the destruction of Jerusalem; and he died as he had lived, a Pharisee. There is not the least evidence that he was a friend of the Christian religion (Barnes 414).

**a doctor of the law:** "Doctor" indicates one who is a teacher of the Old Testament law. Such a celebrated instructor is Gamaliel that young men, including the young man Saul who become the Apostle Paul, came from all over the world to sit at his feet (22:3).

**had in reputation among all the people:** Because of his abilities and influence as a master teacher, Gamaliel enjoys a heroic status among the Jews. What he has to say would not go unheeded.

**and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space:** Gamaliel gives orders to have the apostles removed so he might speak to the council in private.

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

Gamaliel now takes the opportunity to address the assembly and to offer a word of caution in how they should deal with the apostles. Here might be a good place to note that the teaching of the apostles concerning the resurrection is not a problem for Gamaliel because he is a Pharisee. It could be that Gamaliel even enjoys watching the Sadducees flinch every time the word resurrection is mentioned.
36 For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought.

For before these days rose up Theudas: There is much discussion among the scholars as to the identity of “Theudas.” This was a common name among the Jews.

Of this man nothing more is known than is here recorded. Josephus (Antiq. b. xx. chap. v). mentions one Theudas, in the time of Fadus the procurator of Judea, in the reign of the emperor Claudius, (A.D.45 or 46,) who persuaded a great part of the people to take their effects with him, and follow him to the river Jordan. He told them he was a prophet, and that he would divide the river, and lead them over. Fadus, however, came suddenly upon them, and slew many of them. Theduas was taken alive, and conveyed to Jerusalem, and there beheaded. But this occurred at least ten or fifteen years after this discourse of Gamaliel. Many efforts have been made to reconcile Luke and Josephus, on the supposition that they refer to the same man. Lightfoot supposed that Josephus had made an error in chronology. But there is no reason to suppose that there is reference to the same event; and the fact that Josephus has not recorded the insurrection referred to by Gamaliel, does not militate at all against the account in the Acts (Barnes 414).

boasting himself to be somebody: Theudas claimed to be a prophet able to divide the waters of Jordan.
to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought: The insurrection of Theudas failed. The wisdom of Gamaliel is that Theudas failed because God did not bless his efforts. This logic as applied to the apostles is, if God is not for them, they also will fail.

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

After this man rose up Judas of Galilee: This Judas led what amounted to a tax revolt against the Roman government. "Josephus has given an account of this man (Ant.XVII. 10.5). He says the revolt took place under Quirinius, at a time when an enrollment was being made" (Reese 184).

In the days of the taxing: The Romans required all the people under their control be "enrolled" (registered) to pay taxes. This enrollment is similar to the one that caused Mary and Joseph to be in the city of Bethlehem when Jesus was born.

and drew away much people after him: Like Theudas, Judas also gathered a following of several hundred people.

he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed: The end result was the same. The revolt of Judas was crushed. The same reasoning is applied by Gamaliel, God was not with Judas and his followers; therefore they failed.
38And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this
counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought:

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

The conclusion to the two examples presented by Gamaliel and the application to the apostles
is:

1) Leave these men alone.
2) If they are working without the blessing of God, they will fail.
3) If they are working with God’s blessing, no amount of opposition will defeat them.
4) In our opposition to them; it could be possible, we are fighting against the will of
   Almighty God.

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

And to him they agreed: The rest of the Jews agree with the reasoning of Gamaliel, and the
murderous intentions of the Sanhedrin are postponed at least temporarily. Gamaliel may have
been a wise man, but he certainly does not show it here. His decision is no decision. Let us
wait and see what happens. It is amazing to analyze the events that have transpired and to
see a "doctor of the Law" who cannot decide if God be for or against the apostles. The
witnesses are all in: the healing of the lame man is common knowledge, the jailors who stood
guard all night over an empty jail have given their testimony, the tomb of Jesus is empty, yet
the "wise men" cannot decide whether God be for them or not!
For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them (Matthew 13:15).

and when they had called the apostles: The apostles are again brought before the court.

and beaten them: Though Gamaliel advises to "let them alone," this twice thwarted and now thoroughly frustrated court makes an attempt to save face by whipping the apostles. This beating is no small chastisement; it usually involves "forty stripes save one." This is a penalty Jesus had foretold would happen to the apostles:

But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues (Matthew 10:17).

they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus: What a futile command. Surely this "august council" realizes by now that the tide of Christianity will not be turned by the issue of a toothless command. In reality, they should know by now that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18).

and let them go: For the second time, the Sanhedrin has failed; the apostles are released.
41 And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.

The purpose of a public beating is not only to inflict injury but also to bring shame. Are the apostles disgraced by the "shame" brought upon them? To the contrary, the apostles glory in the fact they are "counted worthy" to "suffer shame" for Jesus’ name.

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

And daily in the temple: The apostles continue to preach right under the noses of the men who have just instructed them "not to speak in the name of Jesus." It is very probable they continue to use Solomon’s porch as a gathering place for the assembly of the saints.

and in every house: They take the gospel into the private homes of those who would have them. This type of evangelism is an example for us. They preach "every day" in "every place" that they can.
	hey ceased not to teach and preach: Teaching and preaching describe the work of the apostles. The word didaskonte is the original for "teaching" while euaggelizomenoi is the original for “preaching.” The only distinction drawn between the words is found in the context and the message delivered. To teach is "to instruct, teach" while "to preach" carries the idea of "proclaim good news, preach the gospel, to evangelize" (Wigram-Green 171, 354). From this context, it can be drawn that the apostles preach the "good news" in the temple and give teaching (further instruction) in private houses.
Jesus Christ: Jesus Christ is the reason for the zeal and determination in the hearts of these early disciples. He is their "Lord and Christ" (2:36). An observer of the events just discussed might ask how is it possible for these common men to receive a command from the highest court in the land, "do not speak in the name of Jesus Christ," yet they are preaching this very prohibition literally before they leave the court house steps! Have these men no fear? The answer is yes, they have fears, but not of what men can do to them, rather what God can do to them.

And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (Matthew 10:28).

No order from a mere man will cause the apostles to cease preaching, both publicly and privately, the wonderful message of Jesus Christ for they have a divine commission to preach the "good news" to "all the world" (Mark 16:15).
In this chapter we find an account of the apostles’ dealing with a problem in the church and the beginning of the ministry of Stephen.

1 And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.

And in those days: This phrase represents an indefinite period of time; perhaps as much as six to eight years have passed since the establishment of the church.

when the number of the disciples was multiplied: The size of the church has literally grown by leaps and bounds. Some scholars estimate there may have been as many as twenty thousand Christians in the area around Jerusalem (5:14).

there arose a murmuring: To murmur is to complain. In the Old Testament, Israel is often described as "murmuring." This constant complaining seems to have been a source of irritation that wore on the patience of God. "How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me" (Numbers 14:27)? In New Testament times, this sin of whispering and discontent is warned against (1 Corinthians 10:10; Philippians 2:14). It is obvious, according to the context, "murmuring" (griping, complaining, grumbling) results in discord and division in the Lord's church. This sin will produce the same results today.
of the Grecians against the Hebrews: The problem about to be dealt with is a dispute between the Greeks and the Hebrews in the church in Jerusalem.

"Grecian Jews" were "Hellenists," or Jews who are born and reared in another country than Palestine; "Hebrews" are the Jews who were of pure Jewish blood and spoke the Hebrew language. Paul says he is "a Hebrew of the Hebrews" (Philippians 3:5), which means he is of pure Hebrew blood and he speaks the Hebrew language (Boles 94).

because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration: The early church demonstrates concern for the needy, in this case, widows, by a "daily ministration" to their needs (4:35; 1 Timothy 3:3-16; James 1:27). The Grecian Jews make the charge that "their widows" are not receiving equal treatment.

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

Then the twelve: This is the eleven original apostles plus Matthias who was chosen to replace Judas (1:26).

called the multitude of the disciples unto them: A meeting is called to consider the problem.

and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God: The logic used by the apostles is thus: we should not forsake the preaching and teaching of the word of God in order to meet the temporal needs of a few. It is not that the daily care of the needy is not important, but they do not leave their first priority of preaching to tend to "serving tables." This concept is just the opposite of the tenets of the social gospel practiced by many today.
and serve tables: The Greek word, *diakoneo*, here rendered "serve," may be defined as, "to serve, wait upon, (a) as a waiter, Lk 12:37; (b) to minister, help, Mt.25:44; Ac 19:22; (c) to serve as a deacon, I Tm 3:10" (Wigram-Green 164).

There are at least three English words that describe this activity; servant, minister, and deacon. The context helps us to determine which of these words is to be used.

It is upon this rather precarious basis that the men here appointed are often called "deacons." Significantly, the record here does not so name them, nor is there very much similarity between their status and that of the deacons Paul commanded Timothy to appoint. The men here were not assistants to elders of the church, but to the Twelve; and, furthermore, they are endowed by a laying on of the hands of the apostles. Perhaps the best name for them is the Seven, as Luke himself calls them (Acts 21:8) (Coffman 123-124).

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

*Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men:* The apostles instruct the congregation to "look ye out," that is to "look at" or examine, seven men to be responsible for this "daily ministration." By allowing the "brethren" to choose the men, there could be no charge of partiality made against the apostles. These men are chosen by the brethren, but they are to be "appointed" by the apostles. There does not seem to be any special significance in the number seven.

*of honest report:* These men, by necessity, have to be men of good reputation and integrity.
**full of the Holy Ghost:** This is not a reference to miraculous spiritual gifts but rather to the "gift of the Holy Spirit" or the indwelling Spirit that is promised to all Christians (see notes on 2:38). The "seven" do not receive miraculous abilities until after the "laying on of the apostles' hands," according to verses 6-8. If this situation had been a reference to miraculous spiritual gifts, why would the writer have mentioned "wisdom" and also "faith" (verse 5) as "the word of wisdom" and "faith" are "gifts of the Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:8)?

If we were asked to select men “full of the Holy Ghost” today, what would we look for? We would look for men whose lives demonstrate, in abundance, the "fruit of the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22-23). "He means men who were full of the Spirit as respects the fruits of a holy life" (McGarvey, Vol. I 105). A man can be recognized for what he really is by observing what his life produces. Jesus says, "... by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:20).

**and wisdom:** The seven are to be men able to make wise and fair decisions.

**whom we may appoint:** Although the selection is done by the "brethren," the power of ordaining these men is retained by the apostles.

**over this business:** The business involves an equitable division of the alms to care for the poor widows.

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

With the temporal problems of the church delegated to the care of the seven, the apostles will be free to devote their energies to spiritual matters.
And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch:

And the saying pleased the whole multitude: This proposition, as presented by the apostles, pleases the congregation. The wisdom of this solution can be seen by all.

and they chose Stephen: Luke introduces Stephen first of the seven. Of Stephen’s previous life, we know nothing for certain, but Stephen is soon to go down in the annals of sacred history as the first Christian martyr.

a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost: Stephen is a man "full of faith" that comes from his knowledge of God's word (Romans 10:17). But it must also be noted, Stephen is also a man "full of the Holy Ghost." The Holy Spirit did not dwell in Stephen by faith as maintained by some. Stephen is full of the Holy Spirit as well as being "full of faith"! As surely as our own spirit dwells in us, so also the Holy Spirit dwells in every child of God (see notes on verse 3 above as well as 2:38; 11:24).

and Philip: This Philip becomes the great evangelist who carries the gospel to Samaria where Simon the sorcerer is converted; later, in the same chapter, the eunuch is also converted (8:1-40; 21:8).
and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: Of the remaining five, very little is known of their past or what they accomplished for the Lord's cause. It might be noted that all of the names are Greek names. Some scholars assume all seven are members of the complaining party, but this is not necessarily so. "There is no reason to infer from this that they were all Hellenists. It was customary among the Jews to have two names, the one Hebrew and the other Greek. They were probably partly Hebrews and partly Hellenists" (Vincent 474-475). It is mentioned that Nicolaus is a proselyte, indicating he is converted from paganism to Judaism before he is converted to Christianity.

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

Whom they set before the apostles: The seven candidates selected to remedy the problem among the widows are presented to the apostles to be ordained for the job.

and when they had prayed: The apostles never make decisions or appointments without invoking the blessing of God upon their actions.

they laid their hands on them: This is the first mention of the "laying on of hands" in the New Testament, giving these seven the means by which they will be enabled to work miracles and wonders. This practice was common among the Jews. The "laying on of hands" was used to bestow a blessing (Genesis 48:12-15), to indicate a successor (Numbers 27:18), and to satisfy various other purposes. This process, as used in the New Testament, does not necessarily imply the impartation of miraculous abilities (1 Timothy 4:14), although the "laying on of the apostles' hands" is the means of giving the miraculous powers of the Holy Spirit to selected men. It should be remembered the apostles received miraculous abilities through the baptism of the Holy Spirit as recorded in Acts 2:1-4. These miraculous powers could be passed on to
others in only one way, by the "laying on of the apostles' hands" (8:18). It should be understood that when the last apostle died, the ability to pass on the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit ceased (see notes on 8:18).

The Seven were already "full of the Holy Spirit" in the sense ordinary; and therefore something more is intended here. Luke himself connected the laying on of the apostles' hands with the gift extraordinary of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:18); and coupled with Luke's statement a moment later that one of the Seven did "great wonders and signs among the people" (v. 8), the teaching appears to be that the apostles here endowed the Seven with miraculous powers. To view the laying on of hands as a mere ceremony of ordination is incorrect (Coffman 126).

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

And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly

It seems every time an obstacle is overcome it results in a flourish of growth for the Lord's church. Today we must realize the problems affecting the church must be dealt with firmly, fairly, and as swiftly as possible, or else they will hinder the church’s growth. In Luke's history of the church, he often takes the opportunity to chronicle the rapid growth of the church (2:41; 4:4; 5:14; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20).

and a great company of the priests were obedient: Even among the company of what are usually haughty and arrogant men, the power of the gospel of Christ is felt. Many of the priests have their hearts pricked by the gospel and turn to Christianity.
to the faith: We must not overlook the expression, "obedient to the faith."

There is something more to their faith than mere mental assent; there is something in it that demands obedience ... The apostles preach "the faith" and men become obedient to it. When we examine Acts 2:38 and 3:19 we must conclude their obedience entails repentance and baptism ... for the remission of sins (De Welt 86).

Luke has described three things to show the progress of the church:

12. The word of God increases.
13. The number pf the disciples multiplies.
14. A great many of the priests are obedient to the faith.

We may rest assured this progress does not go unobserved by the enemies of Christianity. This success is soon to bring a blood bath upon the disciples of Jesus.

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

And Stephen, full of faith and power: Luke describes the soon-to-be first Christian martyr as a man with complete confidence in God who, by the power given him through "the laying on of the apostles' hands" (verse 6), is able to perform miracles of a significant magnitude among the people.

did great wonders and miracles among the people: By the use of "wonders and miracles," Stephen draws much attention to the words he preaches. This is the purpose of miracles: to confirm the testimony of the preacher (see notes on 2:17, 4:30).
9 Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen.

Then there arose certain of the synagogue: There is some discussion as to whether Luke has reference to one particular "synagogue" or perhaps to a separate "synagogue" for each of the groups named. It should be noted the word "synagogue" is singular and appears to denote one particular place, although if the reference is to more than one synagogue it is, as McGarvey says, "of no special importance" (Vol. I 112).

which is called the synagogue: Thayer defines "synagogue" as "an assembly of Jews formally gathered together to offer prayer and listen to the reading and exposition of Holy Scriptures" (600-1-4864). This "synagogue" is a gathering of the following groups of Jews.

of the Libertines: The term "Libertines" is a Latin word meaning "Freedmen." These Greek Jews have at one time been slaves, but now they are "Libertines" or "Freedmen."

and Cyrenians: These are men from Cyrene, a region that lies about five hundred miles west of Alexandria, Egypt.

and Alexandrians: These are men from the city of Alexandria in Egypt. Alexandria was founded by Alexander the Great, B. C. 332, and was populated by colonies of Greeks and Jews. Next to Jerusalem and Rome, there is no other city that has a larger population of Jews. It is in Alexandria that the Greek translation of the Old Testament, known as the Septuagint, is written.
and of them of Cilicia: There are many Jews in the providence of Cilicia. The capital of this providence, in Asia Minor, is the city of Tarsus, which is the home of Paul (9:11). It is very likely Paul is a ring leader in this dispute with Stephen.

and of Asia: This phrase refers to an area in and about the modern country of Turkey.

disputing with Stephen: Stephen, also being a Greek, is most likely a member of this synagogue; therefore, it is only natural he would attempt to teach these of his own background. It is logical Stephen will receive his strongest opposition in the synagogue. It should also be noted that the opposition to the truth has now been undertaken in a much more deadly fashion by the sect of the Jews known as the Pharisees. Until now the primary opposition to the church has been by the Sadducees, but now the Pharisees become actively involved. Where the plots of the Sadducees to put Christians to death have failed, the murderous Pharisees succeed.

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

And they were not able to resist the wisdom: Stephen certainly meets the requirements of his calling as a man of wisdom (6:3). He demonstrates his wisdom in a way the Jews could not "resist."

and the spirit by which he spake: Although the word "spirit" is not capitalized in the King James Version, it should be understood the reference is to the Holy Spirit. Most other translations, American Standard Version, New International Version, etc., indicate the reference is to the Holy Spirit. It is by inspiration of the Holy Spirit that Stephen is able to present irrefutable arguments to these Jews. This ability to speak by inspiration is one of the miraculous abilities Stephen receives by "the laying on of the apostles' hands."
11 Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God.

Then they suborned men: "To ‘suborn’ in the legal sense is to procure a person who will take a false oath" (Vine, Vol. IV 87).

That is they bribed men to be false witnesses. The Greek word speaks of bringing men under one's control by suggestion or money. By some means or other, they induced them to lie in court about what Stephen had actually said (Reese 212).

which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God: The testimony of these lying witnesses is that Stephen has "blasphemed" Moses and God. It is not difficult to see how they might twist the words of Stephen and accuse him of blasphemy of the Law, but how can it be said he is blaspheming God? Perhaps the Jews consider one who speaks against the Law or the temple as one who blasphemes God. There is no proof offered for the charges; in reality the charges are as false as the witnesses.

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

And they stirred up the people: This is the first time the ordinary people are stirred up against the disciples. Until now, the fear of the common man has caused the violence of the Jewish leaders to be tempered. The Sadducees have conducted the previous inquisitions, but they have little influence with the people. The Pharisees, being the teachers and leaders in the synagogues, have more influence with the common people; therefore, it is easier for them to gain the following of the multitude.
and the elders, and the scribes: Apparently, even the members of the Sanhedrin are "stirred up" against Stephen.

and came upon him, and caught him: Now that the leaders of the synagogue have the crowd in a bloodthirsty mode, they go after Stephen.

and brought him to the council: This expression certainly sounds familiar. Just as Peter and John are brought before the Sanhedrin in previous chapters, now Stephen will make a defense for his life.

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

And set up false witnesses: The "suborned men" are produced to press the false charges against Stephen.

which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law: They have added an additional charge; along with a charge of blasphemy of God and the Law, now they include "words against this holy place," meaning the temple.

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

For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place: The false witnesses begin their perjured testimony. Here is a misrepresentation of the words of Jesus.
"It is quite probable that Stephen had, in the course of the debate, quoted the prediction of Jesus that the temple would be destroyed, but had not said that Jesus would destroy it; and as his enemies could see that the destruction of the temple would necessarily bring to an end the temple services..." (McGarvey, Vol. I 114) (Matthew 24:1-2).

**and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us:** Stephen is accused of blaspheming Moses by changing the Law.

Only malignant spite could construe Stephen’s preaching the very changes God himself had prophesied in the OT scriptures as blasphemy, either of God or Moses. Thus it was no mere twisting what Jesus or Stephen had said, no mere distortion of their words, which was practiced by the suborned witnesses. Their testimony was totally false (Coffman 131).

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

This council, which must have contained Paul, is in for an unforgettable experience. As members of the council look upon Stephen, his face is "as the face of an angel." There are those who prefer to view this appearance as the natural radiance of a righteous person who stands in complete confidence in the presence of God and man. This view seems to fall short of the phenomenon as Luke records it. Here is a man who is allowed to look into heaven (7:56). It is obvious his face reflects the divine presence of God. Whatever is the explanation, Paul has forever the face of Stephen indelibly etched upon his conscience. Paul's memory is never relieved of the sorrow of this tragic day when the first martyr for Christ paid for his faith with his blood.
Chapter 7

This chapter is devoted to the defense Stephen made before the court. Stephen's speech is a fearless account of Jewish history as it relates to the coming of Jesus and His rejection as the Messiah. Over the years there have been critics who attempted to show "so-called contradictions" in the historical facts as presented by Stephen. But as noted by Coffman, "those great experts of Jewish history who sat in the Sanhedrin found no fault whatever with the history cited by Stephen; the only thing they objected to was his application of it!" (133).

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

Then said the high priest: Caiaphas, who served as high priest until A.D. 36, is again in charge of those who would rid the world of Christianity. He presides against Jesus in Matthew 26:57-66, against Peter and John in Acts 4:18, against the apostles in Acts 5:40; and now against Stephen.

Are these things so: Stephen has been accused of blaspheming God, the Law, and the temple. All of these charges are made by "suborned" (6:11), that is, lying witnesses; and Caiaphas has the hypocritical arrogance to ask "Are these things so?" Stephen is being asked to plead guilty or not guilty, thus setting the stage for his discourse.
2 And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran,

And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken: With his face glowing as the "face of an angel," Stephen addresses the entire audience. "Men and brethren" would be those onlookers who line the judgment hall while "fathers" indicates members of the Sanhedrin. Stephen, being "full of wisdom," makes his defense by using an indirect approach to his declaration of Jesus as the promised Messiah. It is a common procedure in trials to appeal to similar cases to substantiate the verdict desired. In his defense, Stephen intends to show that his judges have the same characteristics as their forefathers. They are willing to reject anyone who is approved of God.

Throughout the entire history of the Jews he weaves the thought that every man whom God sent to the nation of Israel was rejected and mistreated; that there was not one man sent from God who was accepted for what he was. In the case of Joseph, the Patriarchs refused him and sold him into Egypt. Moses was twice rejected. The application that fairly shouts from Stephen's account is that the rulers of the Jews in his day were doing with Jesus exactly what their fathers did with Joseph, Moses and all the prophets (De Welt 93).

The God of glory: Stephen begins his discourse with a Hebrew expression that means "the glorious God."

appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia: "Mesopotamia" literally means "between the rivers." In this case it refers to the land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. In Genesis 11:31, the area in Mesopotamia where Abraham lived is called "Ur of the Chaldees."
before he dwelt in Charran: Charran is the Greek form of the Hebrew word Haran. This region is also in Mesopotamia but is north of Ur of the Chaldees. This is one of the places where pseudo Bible intellectuals attempt to find a discrepancy in the historical account of Luke. As usual, the only discrepancy is on the part of the critic. Dennis Gaertner gives the following explanation:

Stephen places God's call of Abraham "in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran." The call recorded in Genesis 12:1 however, comes after Abraham's arrival in Haran. But this problem seems to disappear when Genesis 15:7 is taken into account, a passage which has the Lord saying to Abraham "I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans" (127).

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

Abraham receives instruction from God to leave his home and his "kindred" to travel to an unknown land (Genesis 12:1). This unquestioning act of obedience on the part of Abraham is forever remembered in God's word.

By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went (Hebrews 11:8).

This separation from his "kindred" also served another purpose to benefit Abraham. He was removed from the influence of his idolatrous relatives.
4 Then came he out of the land of the Chaldaeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell.

Abraham left the "land of the Chaldaeans" in Mesopotamia and along with his father Terah and his nephew Lot settled in Charran. They remained in Charran until Abraham's father died; and then under divine instruction, Abraham moved to Canaan.

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

In an emphatic way, the scriptures tell us Abraham had no land of his own. He received no permanent possession or residence in the land of Canaan.

Abraham was given no part of the land in actual possession; for the rest of his life he lived as a resident alien there. It was a promised land to him, indeed--promised to him and his posterity before he had any children--but to him and his immediate posterity it remained no more than a "promised land." (Bruce 147).

The only land Abraham ever owned in Canaan was the cave "in the field of Machpelah," which he purchased from the children of Heth for a grave (Genesis 23).
6 And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat them evil four hundred years.

Here, Stephen speaks of the time the "seed" of Abraham, the Israelites, left the land of Canaan to travel to the land of Egypt. Egypt became the land of bondage; Israel became slaves (Exodus 1:11). Surely, Egypt was a "strange" land to Israel, but the actual meaning of this phrase is that Israel would be "a stranger in the land that is not theirs" (Genesis 15:13). "To sojourn means that they would have a temporary residence there. The word is used in opposition to a fixed, permanent home, and is applied to travelers, or foreigners" (Barnes 421).

The "four hundred years" is another statement Bible critics strain at. In the account in Exodus 12:40 and Paul's record in Galatians 3:17, the figure is given at 430 years.

Exodus 12:40 gives the time as 430 years; but the four hundred years is a round number as in Genesis 15:13. Also, there are two ways of counting the "so-journing," these being (1) from the call of Abraham to the Exodus, which was 430 years, and (2) from the birth of Isaac to the Exodus, which was 400 years. ... It is ridiculous to make anything out of such so-called discrepancies as these" (Coffman 135-36).

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

This reference is to the nation of Egypt; they were to feel the judgment of God. "The word `judge', in the Bible, often means to execute judgment as well as to pronounce it; that is, to punish" (Barnes 4:22) (John 18:31; Acts 24:6). Egypt experienced the wrath of God's judgment in the plagues inflicted upon them and the disaster in the Red Sea. After the bondage in Egypt, Israel was delivered to serve God in the "promised land."
8 And he gave him the covenant of circumcision: and so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs.

And he gave him the covenant of circumcision: God gave to Abraham the token of circumcision as a sign of the covenant that He made with him. Circumcision became the physical mark that distinguished the people of God. Although some other nations practiced circumcision, this sign had spiritual significance only to the Israelites (Genesis 17:9-13).

The covenant of circumcision was given the year before Isaac was born. The argument suggested here is apparently the same as Paul's in Romans 4:10-17. There it is argued that circumcision has nothing to do with Abraham's justification -- he being justified before the seal of circumcision was given. Circumcision had nothing to do with Abraham's being reckoned as righteous by God. Thirteen or more years before he received the covenant of circumcision from God, he had been reckoned as righteous because of his continuing obedient faith, Romans 4:1ff and Galatians 3:17 (Reese 224).

and so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day: Abraham circumcised Isaac on the "eighth day," and in so doing, the sign of the covenant was transmitted from generation to generation.

and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs: Through this chronology, the foundation for the nation of Israel is established. Beginning with Abraham, followed by Isaac and Jacob and finally the twelve patriarchs, the twelve tribes of Israel were established. "The word patriarch properly denotes the father and ruler of a family. But it is commonly applied, by way of eminence, to the progenitors of the Jewish race, particularly to the twelve sons of Jacob" (Barnes 422).
Thus far, Stephen has delivered a brief history of the origin of Israel by tracing its roots back to Father Abraham. He now turns his attention to Joseph to demonstrate how Israel has historically rejected those God would put in leadership.

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

And the patriarchs: In this case, the "patriarchs" are Joseph's own brothers.

moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: The brothers of Joseph were envious of him because of the favor showed to him by his father Jacob and the dreams that Joseph had. They sold him into slavery (Genesis 37:3-28).

but God was with him: As surely as God has watched over the fortunes of Abraham, He also guided and protected the life of Joseph. Stephen's point is clear, "God was with him"; and whomever God is with, Israel is against!

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

And delivered him out of all his afflictions: By the providence of God, Joseph is delivered from bondage and affliction to a position of high honor.

and gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt: In particular, Joseph shows his wisdom in the interpretation of the Pharaoh's dreams (Genesis 41). The word "Pharaoh" is not the king's name but rather his title. All the kings of Egypt were called Pharaoh.
and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house: Joseph became the right-hand man to Pharaoh and took charge over the affairs of Egypt.

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

Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Chanaan, and great affliction: Stephen reminds his audience of the famine and "great affliction" that eventually brought the "patriarchs" to depend on the mercy of Joseph. One can only wonder what it would take to cause Stephen's audience, on that day or in the world today, to realize their spiritual famine and to cause them to turn to the mercies of Jesus.

and our fathers found no sustenance: There was no food for man or beast in Canaan.

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

Because of the "wisdom" of Joseph, the Egyptians stored grain during the years of plenty; therefore, they had excess to sell. "Corn" here is not corn as we usually understand it but rather wheat or barley. The brothers of Joseph were sent to Egypt to buy this grain (Genesis 42).
13 And at the second time Joseph was made known to his brethren; and Joseph's kindred was made known unto Pharaoh.

On the second occasion when they went to Egypt to buy food, Joseph (whom they had not recognized the first time) made himself known to them; is there a suggestion here that a greater than Joseph, who was not recognized by His brethren when they saw Him for the first time, will be acknowledged by them as their anointed deliverer when they see Him the second time (Bruce 148)?

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

After Joseph revealed himself to his brethren, he sent word to his father to join him in Egypt (Genesis 45:17-28). Stephen says there were "threescore and fifteen souls" or seventy-five of Joseph's relatives who moved to Egypt. This is another of the alleged mistakes made by Stephen as the account elsewhere states the number was seventy. McGarvey gives this explanation:

Stephen, being a Hellenist, read the Scriptures in the Greek translation, as did all of his adversaries in the foreign synagogue, and as did the great majority of the Jewish people, to whom the original Hebrew was already a dead language. His Greek Bible, the Septuagint version, gives precisely the number of names which he here quotes. It reads: "All the souls of the house of Jacob who went with Jacob into Egypt, were seventy-five souls;" and it makes the additional five, by giving, at verse 20, the names of two sons of Manasseh, two of Ephraim, and one grandson of the latter. Stephen then gave the figures as he and his hearers read them in their Bible, and perhaps neither he
nor they had ever observed the discrepancy between the version and the original (Vol. I 120).

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

The time spent in Egypt by the Israelites was long enough that Jacob and all of his sons died there. They literally died in bondage waiting for a leader to take them to the promised land. Do the inquisitors of Stephen also miss this point? The answer is obvious.

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

Here Stephen is charged with another error. Is he saying Jacob and all of his sons died and were carried "over into Sychem" to be buried? The answer is no.

Stephen's comments on the location of the tomb of the patriarchs presents an example of compressing of the narrative. Genesis describes two purchases of burial plots—one by Abraham at Hebron (Genesis 23:17-18) and the other by Jacob at Shechem (Genesis 33:19). Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were buried at Hebron while Joseph was buried later at Shechem (Joshua 24:32). Stephen compressed these accounts into one story in his statement that the patriarchs were buried "in the tomb that Abraham had bought" at Shechem. The Sanhedrin would have understood his summary completely (Gaertner 129-130).
May we remind the reader these so-called mistakes that are charged to Stephen in the first sixteen verses of his narrative are not challenged by this supreme council of the Jews. If there is any group that could have pointed out the mistakes of Stephen, either in history or geography, it is this ultra legalistic group of scholars before whom he makes his defense. As far as the Sanhedrin is concerned, the only mistake Stephen makes is in accusing them of killing Jesus!

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

And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them (Exodus 1:7).

Stephen has shown that the Patriarchs rejected Joseph who had saved the Israelites from starvation; now he will demonstrate that they also rejected Moses who would lead them out of bondage. Stephen’s case for Jesus builds. The time is drawing nigh for the deliverance of Israel.

18 Till another king arose, which knew not Joseph.

The instrument in God’s hand to bring about the exodus of Israel out of Egypt was to be a new Pharaoh. This new king evidently did not realize the valuable service rendered by Joseph in former days; therefore, he did not show the same appreciation to the Israelites as they had received in earlier days.
19 The same dealt subtilly with our kindred, and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live.

This new Pharaoh is a hard taskmaster over Israel. "The Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour" (Exodus 1:13). He viewed the increase in Hebrew population as a threat, and thus he commanded, "Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, ..." (Exodus 1:22).

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

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

During this time of oppression, Moses is born. He is sheltered in his father's house for three months before being set upon the river in "an ark of bulrushes" (Exodus 2:3). Pharaoh's daughter finds baby Moses and brings him up as her own son in a style befitting a royal prince (Exodus 2:1-10). "Truly God was working in a marvelous way His wonders to perform! Little did the king and his daughter realize that God was using them, His very enemies, to train and protect a leader to deliver Israel from their hands" (Reese 229).

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

Moses had the benefit of the best education the Egyptians could provide. The wisdom and knowledge of the Egyptians was revered all over the world of that day and age. The Egyptians were famous for their studies in music, geometry, medicine, and mathematics; and we might assume Moses was educated in all of these areas of arts and sciences. But the most outstanding thing about the education of Moses must have come from the influence of his
mother. Amidst the wealth, culture and "pleasures of sin," Moses never forgot the true
priorities of life. Moses chose to "suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the
pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the
treasures in Egypt..." (Hebrews 11:25-26). Christian parents take heart! "Bring up your
children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" and "when they are old they will not depart
from it" (Ephesians 6:4; Proverbs 22:6).

23 And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the
children of Israel.
24 And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was
oppressed, and smote the Egyptian:

In spite of the Egyptian ties that Moses had, he never forgot he was a Hebrew. When he was
forty years old, he began to take steps to become the leader for Israel; but his intervention on
their behalf was not appreciated. When Moses observed an Israelite being whipped by his
Egyptian taskmaster, Moses "smote the Egyptian" and killed him (Exodus 2:11-12).

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

This point seems to be the core of the problem. Israel did not understand that Moses was to
be their deliverer, nor were they ready to accept him as such.
26 And the next day he shewed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another?

According to Exodus 2:13, two Israelites were in a fight with each other when Moses attempts to establish peace between them. The one who was at fault totally rejected the attempt of Moses to bring reconciliation; instead he made charges against Moses.

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

The Hebrew, who was in the wrong, pushed Moses away and taunted him with the question, “who made you a ruler?” In other words, Moses was being asked what authority he had that gave him power over them? Stephen has again presented a parallel that the Sanhedrin should not have missed. It is this same murderous court that asked Jesus "by what authority doest thou these things; or who gave thee this authority?" (Mark 11:28).

28 Wilt thou kill me, as thou diddest the Egyptian yesterday?
29 Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Madian, where he begat two sons.

Moses had exposed himself to grave peril by his attempt to champion his oppressed people's cause; his action in killing an Egyptian bully was more widely known than he wished, and he had to leave Egypt in haste and find refuge in north -west Arabia (Bruce 150).
Moses correctly assumes his life would be in jeopardy if the news of his killing the Egyptian reached Pharaoh. "Pharaoh sought to slay Moses" (Exodus 2:15). In Midian, Moses married Zipporah, the daughter of Jethro. The names of the two sons of Moses were Gershom and Eliezed (Exodus 18:1-4).

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

And when forty years were expired: Moses spent the next forty years in Midian until he was called to deliver Israel. He was now eighty years old.

there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sina: The Exodus account states that the mountain was Horab. “But there is no contradiction; Horab and Sinai are different peaks or elevations of the same mountain” (Barnes 424).

an angel of the Lord: There is much discussion as to the "angel" that spoke to Moses. In this verse the angel is spoken of as the one who would supply the power to deliver Israel. Some commentators (Lenski, Barnes) think the angel is Christ. This interpretation seems to be in opposition to the very principle that makes the New Testament superior to the Old Testament. Paul reasons in Hebrews 2:2-3, “if even the law, ‘spoken through angels,’ imposed inexorable penalties on those who infringed it, much more inexorable will be the penalty of disregarding God’s latest revelation which was communicated not by angels but by His Son ... ” (Bruce 163).
Whether it can be determined if the angel is Christ or not, it must be recognized that this messenger of God is indeed a most powerful and authoritative character in the history of Israel (Exodus 23:20-23). Isaiah refers to him as the "angel of His presence" (Isaiah 63:9). Bruce says, "The angel of the presence" of God (lit. the messenger of His face, ...) is the angel who makes His presence real to men -- in other words, the angel of Jehovah" (152).

By "the angel who spoke to him in Mount Sinai," Stephen means the same angel mentioned in verse 30, where he says, "An angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in a flame of fire in a bush." In the next verse (31) this angel is called The Lord, as in Exodus he is called both Jehovah and God (Ex. ii1 2,4). This shows that visible and audible manifestations of God were made through the persons of angels (McGarvey, Vol. I 125).

in a flame of fire in a bush: In a bush that was burning yet not being consumed by the fire, Moses heard the "voice of God" (Exodus 3:2-6).

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

And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I (Exodus 3:4).
32 Saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and
the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold.

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

It was a fearful thing for Moses to stand in the presence of God. He was afraid and dared not
to look upon the burning bush from which emanated "the voice of God."
He was instructed, "Put off the shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is holy
ground." Again, the thrust of this information is the fact that God appeared to Moses in the
pagan land of Midian, the "holy ground" being neither in a temple nor in Jerusalem. The place
is "holy ground" because of the divine presence of God (Exodus 3:5).

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

God was very much aware of the afflictions of Israel; "He knew their sorrows," and He had not
forgotten His promise to deliver them. The time had come for Moses to be sent back to Egypt
(Exodus 3:7-10).

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

Stephen once again emphasizes the fact that Moses, the leader chosen by God, was rejected
by Israel. The ultimate parallel is that the Jews also rejected Jesus Christ.
36 He brought them out, after that he had shewed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the wilderness forty years.

The final forty years of the life of Moses is now brought into focus by Stephen. Mention is made that Moses confirmed himself as the leader of Israel with many "wonders and signs." The dividing of the Red Sea, water from the rock, deliverance from serpents- these are but a few of the many miracles of Moses. It should have come to the mind of Stephen's accusers that Jesus also is "approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs" (2:22).

37 This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear.

Stephen here shows that in reality he is the one who honors and respects Moses, and they are the ones who opposed and rejected him. Moses predicted the coming Messiah, and that Messiah is Jesus. Stephen is willing to "hear" Jesus; the Sanhedrin is not (Deuteronomy 18:15-18). Stephen has not blasphemed Moses; on the contrary, it is the Sanhedrin who blasphemes in their failure to honor the words of Moses when he commanded to "hear" him (see notes on 3:22).

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

This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness: This same Moses is with the "church in the wilderness." The Greek word is ekklesia, "from ek, out of, and klesis, a calling. In Acts 7:38, it is used of Israel ..." (Vine, Vol. I 83-84). Literally the word "church" in this place indicates those Israelites who were "called out of bondage into the wilderness." The Israelites
were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and the sea; they now are the "church" (the called out).

It should be understood this is not a reference to the church of Christ but to the congregation of Israel in the wilderness, which is typical of Christ's church.

The word here rendered church, *ekklesia*, is the one usually so rendered in the N. T., but never in the O. T. As the body of the Israelites represented by it is always in the O. T. styled the congregation, or the assembly, so it should have been here in the text as our revisers have given it in the margin. This is required by uniformity, and it would have prevented some persons from confounding the assembly in the wilderness with the New Testament church (McGarvey, Vol. I 125).

*with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina:* See notes on verse 30.

*and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:* The term "oracles" is used by the Greeks to indicate communication from their gods. Stephen here contrasts what supposedly comes from idols with the words that come from the living God. Moses and the patriarchs received not dead words from dead gods but the "living" words of a living God (Hebrews 4:12; 1 Peter 1:23).

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

*To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them:* Again, Stephen reiterates the rejection of God's chosen leader by the forefathers of these same Jews who are now rejecting Jesus. One would expect the point would have been taken by now. It would be very interesting to know what Saul of Tarsus is thinking at this moment of Stephen's inquisition.
and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt: What a pitiful commentary this is on the people of God. They regretted they had come out of Egypt, preferring a full stomach and the idolatry of Egypt to the freedom found in the wilderness (Exodus 16:2-3; 32:1-23). This sad condition is also reflected by our society. In a nation that allows the freedom to worship God as His word directs, the majority prefer to bow down to the "gods of this world," preferring the morals and habits of the heathen to the good life in service to the living God.

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

"When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount" (Exodus 32:1), they used this occasion as an excuse to build an idol to replace God. How amazing! Moses and God were about as close physically as man and God have ever been; God was engraving the Ten Commandments with His own finger; there was lightning and thundering, along with a host of angels on Mount Sinai; one might expect that Israel was reverently awaiting the return of Moses; but no, Israel had turned to idolatry. They "have sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play" (Exodus 32:6).

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

And they made a calf in those days: When Israel "in their hearts turned back to Egypt," it is a natural thing for them to copy the idols they had seen in Egypt. Cattle were considered sacred and to be worshiped in Egypt, so Israel built themselves a "golden calf." Campbell says, "The science and art of calfmaking ... was an Egyptian art" (49).
This was in imitation of the Egyptian bull-worship. Several of these animals were worshipped at different places in Egypt. Apis was worshipped at Memphis. ... The Egyptians say that fire comes down from heaven upon the cow, which thereupon conceives Apis. ... He was regarded by the Egyptians, not merely as an emblem, but as a god. ... Another sacred bull was maintained at Heliopolis, in the great Temple of the Sun, under the name Mnevis, and was honored with reverence next to Apis (Vincent 481-482).

and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands: How soon the Israelites forgot! The God who brought the plagues upon Egypt, parted the Red Sea, and sent the manna and quail had been replaced by a lifeless, graven image! Stephen has now shown that not only did Israel reject their leaders, but they rejected the very God of Heaven and rejoiced in their sinfulness.

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

Then God turned, and gave them up: The Israelites had shown their inclination toward idolatry; therefore, God abandoned them to their own desires. "God gave them up" to their idolatrous ways after pleading with them for many long years. Paul also uses this term to describe what happens to the Gentiles in Romans 1:24,26, 28.

to worship the host of heaven: Most idolaters, in one way or another, incorporate the sun, moon, stars, etc. into their false worship.

as it is written in the book of the prophets: The following quotation is from Amos 5:25-26.
O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness: We can be sure Israel did offer sacrifices to God during the wilderness wanderings, but we can also be sure that often "their hearts were far from him. They kept the form of worship, but they often forgot God and worshiped idols. In this quote from Amos, Stephen shows that even in the wilderness, Israel rejected God in their hearts. In the next verse, Stephen becomes more specific with his charges.

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

Yea, ye took up: "Took up" literally means they carried with them for the purpose of idolatrous worship. Israel was not only guilty of idolatry, but idolatry was their intention.

the tabernacle of Moloch: The Israelites carried with them the "tabernacle" (tent) of Moloch. This is the container for the various images, charms, and necessary paraphernalia to worship Moloch. Moloch was the god of the Ammonites, to whom children were offered in sacrifice. "According to Rabbinical tradition, his image was hollow, heated from below, with the head of an ox and the outstretched arms, into which children were laid, their cries being stifled by the beating of drums" (Vincent 482-483).

and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them: As is always the case, idolators "worship and serve the creature more than the Creator" (Romans 1:25).
This was a star which was worshipped, but what star it was is not easy to ascertain. In Amos 5:26, the name is given as Chiun, in the Hebrew, and as Rephan (Raiphan or Remphan) in the LXX. The best explanation of this seems to be that Rephan is the Coptic name of the star, and that Chiun is the Hebrew or Arabic name. And the star is usually said to be Saturn (Reese 237).

**and I will carry you away beyond Babylon:** Stephen restates what is said in Amos 5:27. "Where Stephen says ‘beyond Babylon,’ the Hebrew has ‘beyond Damascus;’ however, ‘beyond Damascus’ to the Jewish mind meant Babylon. Stephen's words therefore give an inspired commentary on what the Hebrew meant. Amos has reference to the Babylonian captivity when he predicted a ‘carrying away’ because of their sin and idolatry" (Reese 238). Because of Israel's repeated rejection of God and their persistent obsession with idolatry, God allowed them to be taken into bondage. Not only were the ten northern tribes lost entirely, but the two southern tribes were sent into Babylonian captivity as punishment for their idolatry.

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

The place where God was worshiped in the wilderness, the tabernacle, was moved about as Israel moved from place to place. The argument is that God is not necessarily worshiped in any one particular location to the exclusion of all others. By this discussion, Stephen shows the Jews themselves have changed the religious customs of Moses.
He also mentions that when God spoke to Moses concerning the construction, furnishings, and arrangement of the tabernacle, all things were to be done "according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount" (Hebrews 8:5). It must also be understood that God has a divine pattern that we must follow today. For the work and worship of the Lord's church, a pattern has been revealed in the scriptures. It is up to us to ask for a "thus saith the Lord" for the things that we practice (Matthew 15:9; John 4:23-24; Galatians 1:6-9; 2 Timothy 2:5).

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

Which also our fathers that came after brought in with Jesus: It should be remembered that Moses was not allowed to enter into the Promised Land. Of the original six hundred thousand plus Israelites who left Egypt, only Joshua and Caleb were allowed to enter. "Our fathers that came after" indicates the next generation of Israelites (Numbers 1:46; 14:22-24; 32:11-12). "Jesus" is the Greek word for Joshua. The context of this passage allows us to understand the reference is to Joshua rather than to the Lord. "There is perhaps a tacit suggestion that it is not by accident that the leader who brought them into the earthly land of promise bore the same name as the One under whom they might inherit better promises" (Bruce 156-157).

into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drave out before the face of our fathers:
God gave Israel victory over the Gentiles so that they were able to take the land of Canaan ("the possession of the Gentiles"). Stephen continues to point out that the "tabernacle" was moved about during the sojourn of Israel in the wilderness and later when it was carried into the "Promised Land." The point is that the place of worship changed. Stephen is preparing to show the Jews have also changed the religious customs of their fathers.
unto the days of David: The tabernacle continued to be the place for worship "unto the days of David." David desired to build a permanent place of worship but was not allowed to do so.

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

Because of the sins of David, God did not allow him to build the temple. Instead the temple was eventually built by David's son. Bruce gives the following commentary:

King David, after putting down his enemies inside and outside the land, longed to provide a nobler dwelling-place for the ark than the new tent-shrine he had erected for it on Mount Zion when he brought it out of the long obscurity in which it had remained since its capture and restoration by the Philistines. Ps. 132, which underlies the words of Stephen here, describes How he sware unto Jehovah, And vowed unto the Mighty One of Jacob: Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, Nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes; Or slumber to mine eyelids; Until I find out a place for Jehovah, A tabernacle for the Mighty One of Jacob (vv. 2-5). The contrast between David's own palace, panelled in cedar wood, and the curtained tent within which the ark abode, weighed upon his mind. He confided in the prophet Nathan, and Nathan's first reaction was to bid the king act upon his inclination and build a palace for the ark of God. But Nathan soon ascertained the mind of God more clearly, and went back to David with the message that God desired no house of cedar at his hands, but would Himself establish David's house in perpetuity. Yet a son of David would arise, and build a house for God (2 Sam. 7) (Bruce 157).
47 But Solomon built him an house.

The reason given as to why David was not allowed to build a house for God is that he was a man of war and had "shed much blood upon the earth." Instead, David's son, Solomon, "a man of rest," was allowed to build "an house" unto the name of God (1 Chronicles 22:6-11).

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

Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands: Stephen's reference to the temple of Solomon indicates this temple was not to be the ultimate dwelling place of God because "the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands." The true message, which is probably wasted on this audience, is that it is another "son of David," not Solomon, who is to provide the true temple of God (Matthew 1:1; 15:22; Romans 1:3). "One greater than the temple" is here, that being Jesus Christ (Matthew 12:6). Through Jesus, the dwelling place of God is to be the hearts of men, a "dwelling not made with hands."

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you (1 Corinthians 3:16)?

as saith the prophet: The passage from which the gist of the following statement is taken is Isaiah 66:1-2.
49 Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest?

50 Hath not my hand made all these things?

The idol gods of the heathen might be housed in temples made with hands, but not so for the God of the Universe. He is described as being so vast the entire universe is necessary to provide Him a place to sit while the earth is so small that God uses it as a "footstool." The logic follows: how could it be possible for man to build a physical house that could contain Almighty God? With this reasoning, Stephen shores up his defense that he did not blaspheme the temple.

Involved in these remarks is the argument that inasmuch as the tabernacle was once God's house, but was supplanted by the temple, grand and ancient as it was, was infinitely too small to contain the living God, and was declared by one of their own prophets not to be God's real dwelling place, it could be no blasphemy to say that it was yet to be set aside and destroyed (Reese 240-241).

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

Here, and in the next two verses, it seems that the cherubim-faced Stephen announces the judgment of God upon these evil men whose day of grace has passed. He wastes no words in his summary and condemnation of the conduct of Israel from Moses to the court before which he now stands.
Ye stiffnecked: "Stiffnecked" is an Old Testament term used by God in a description of Israel (Exodus 33:5). It is taken from the figure of oxen that will not submit to being yoked. So it is with the Israelites: they would not submit to the yoke of God.

and uncircumcised in heart and ears: Since circumcision is the mark of the Jew and supposedly indicates an acknowledgment of the law of Moses, anything referred to as uncircumcised is considered heathen and disobedient. To be "uncircumcised in heart and ears" means they are unwilling to acknowledge the Law in their minds or even to listen to it with their ears.

ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye: Stephen establishes a pattern of disobedience from the time of Moses to the court now in session. "You oppose the message which is brought to you by the authority of God and the inspiration of his Spirit. The message brought by Moses; by the prophets; by the Saviour; and by the apostles -- they and their fathers opposed" (Barnes 427).

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

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

In this summary of Stephen’s speech, the pent up emotions he seems to have held in check to this point come forth. Without reservation, he now reverses the charges made against him and turns them upon his audience. They are the ones guilty of resisting the Holy Spirit, disobeying the law received "of angels," rejecting the prophets, and murdering the Messiah. Truly, this accusation of guilt is a bitter pill for these Jews to swallow.
At this point in Stephen's discourse, he has answered all the charges made against him. Did he blaspheme the Law? Not at all. In reality, it is the very "fathers" the Sanhedrin represent who had subverted the Mosaic traditions (verse 39). Did he blaspheme the temple? Again, the answer is no. He has shown that even their own prophets knew that "God dwells not in temples made with hands" (verse 48). What about "this Jesus of Nazareth who shall destroy this place, and change the customs which Moses delivered us" (6:14)? Stephen makes no attempt to deny what Jesus will do, but rather he justifies his position by showing that it is the position held by the patriarchs and prophets that his Jewish opponents have categorically denied. The conclusion: the members of this self-righteous court are the ones in opposition to the eternal plan of God. They are the historical rebels to the leaders that God had chosen for them. They are the closet idolaters who put more emphasis on the temple than upon the Living God, as did their fathers who preferred to worship the "creation rather than the Creator." And finally they are the ones upon whose heads the blood of the "Just One" rests.

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

When they heard these things: When the truth of Stephen's sermon strikes home with the Jews, they react in a violent way.

they were cut to the heart: The message of Stephen has cut them to their very conscience. They are now indignant and enraged by this assault upon their integrity (see notes on 5:33).

and they gnashed on him with their teeth: This statement does not mean they literally attacked Stephen to bite him with their teeth, but rather they are so upset by his charges that they grind their teeth in anguish. To "gnash" one's teeth is a sign of intense bitterness, anguish, and suffering (Matthew 8:12; 13:42).
55 But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,

**But he, being full of the Holy Ghost:** See notes on Acts 6:3.

**looked up stedfastly into heaven:** Stephen, seeing the effect his speech has had upon the crowd, looks intently "into heaven," perhaps for help or encouragement.

**and saw the glory of God:** What better time could God have chosen to give Stephen such a display of reality and support. What a comfort it must have been to see "the glory of God." "It was fitting indeed that God should have given to the first Christian martyr such a glorious vision of eternal realities" (Coffman 146). "This phrase is commonly used to denote the visible symbols of God. It means some magnificent representation; a splendour, or light, that is the appropriate exhibition of the presence of God, Mat. xv1 27; xxiv 30" (Barnes 427).

**and Jesus standing on the right hand of God:** There are some most interesting conjectures drawn from this phrase. The idea that Jesus is "standing" as opposed to sitting seems to indicate the special concern shown for the first Christian to pour out his life’s blood for his faith.

Sitting at the right hand of God is the usual attitude ascribed to our Lord in token of his victorious rest, and waiting for the day of judgment; but here he is seen standing, as rising to welcome his faithful martyr, and to place on his head the crown of life (Hervey 221).
56 And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

Stephen now relates what he sees to his audience. The revelation that he sees "the Son of man standing on the right hand of God" so infuriates the Jews they are ready to put him to death. This is the only occasion when the title, "Son of man" is used in the New Testament except when Jesus uses the term in reference to Himself (Matthew 8:20; 11:19; 12:8; Mark 9:9).

... the presence of Messiah at God's right hand meant that for His people there was now a way of access to God more immediate and heart-satisfying than the obsolete temple ritual had ever been able to provide (Bruce 166).

57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord,

It seems the general assembly of the adversaries of Stephen have heard all they intend to listen to. Stephen has charged them with the murder of Jesus whom he now says he sees at "the right hand of God." Not only does this charge affirm the resurrection of Jesus but also it makes Jesus equal with God. To stop what they consider this blasphemous attack from Stephen, they cry out, stop their ears in order to hear no more, and rush upon him.

This was a strange way for a court to break up; the whole body of seventy grave rabbis, whose official duty it was to watch for the faithful execution of the law, leaving their seats and rushing in a wild mob, amid hideous outcries, to the sudden execution of a prisoner uncondemned and untried (McGarvey, Vol. I 132).
58 And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.

And cast him out of the city: To take him "out of the city" to be stoned is in observation of the Law (Leviticus 24:10-16; Numbers 15:35; Hebrews 13:12).

and stoned him: Stoning is the prescribed punishment for blasphemy (Leviticus 24:16; John 10:31-33). It must be noted this is a totally illegal execution. What begins as a religious inquisition has turned into a mob action. It is not lawful for the Jews to execute anyone without the sanction of the Roman government. In the heat of the moment, there seems to be no way to quench the spirit or shut the mouth of this man Stephen, whose arguments they could not meet, but to put him to death.

and the witnesses laid down their clothes: It is also the teaching of the Law (Deuteronomy 17:7) that those who stand in witness are to be the ones to cast the first stones. One may wonder if those witnesses who accept money to swear lies against Stephen (6:11) have any pangs of conscience when they realize they are now to become his executioners. Surely these wicked men "are of their father the devil" for they are guilty of lies and murder (John 8:44), They "laid down their clothes" (outer garments) in order to have more freedom to hurl their deadly missiles.

at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul: If anything good can be recognized from this grisly scene, it is the lasting impression that is being made upon the "young man whose name is Saul."
Here, in this bloody episode, there was evidence of the timeless principle that "the blood of martyrs is the seed of the church." That young man was never to forget what his eyes that day beheld, what his heart felt, and what his conscience said; and there was born in his soul that instant and impression that would in time recruit him to the faith of Christ and energize the greatest evangelist of all ages (Coffman 147).

The Apostle Paul must have relived the events of this day in his nightmares and on his conscience until he, like Stephen, pays the ultimate price for his faith in Jesus Christ (22:19-20; 1 Timothy 1:15).

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

And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus: This is one of few places in the New Testament where prayer is directed to Jesus rather than through Him to the Father. This seems like the obvious thing for Stephen to do; he sees Jesus in the vision and cries out to Him in prayer.

receive my spirit: Stephen requests Jesus to "receive my spirit." This is a very similar statement to the one Jesus makes as He is dying upon the cross; "Father into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46). The wise man says, ".. and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it" (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

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

And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice: In a praying posture, Stephen makes one last request.
**Lord, lay not this sin to their charge:** Again, this statement is very similar to the prayer of Jesus, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). "The spirit of Christ is a spirit of forgiveness; it leads us to love our enemies and to bless them that curse us, and to pray for them who despitefully use us (Matt. 5:44)" (Boles 120).

It should be noted the Jews do not ask for Stephen's forgiveness, yet he forgives them anyway. Does the fact that Stephen says, "lay not this sin to their charge," mean God forgave them for their evil deed? Certainly not! What happened is the same thing that happened with Jesus. Both Jesus and Stephen dismiss themselves from the cares of this world and give them over to God. God will take care of the judgment of sinful men. The Christian has the same opportunity today. We can forgive those who sin against us regardless of whether they ask for our forgiveness or not (Matthew 6:12). This relieves us of a worldly burden and allows God to be the judge.

**And when he had said this, he fell asleep:** The term "sleep" is often used to describe death (Matthew 9:24; Mark 5:39; 1 Corinthians 15:18, 51; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14). What a simple and beautiful way this is to describe the passing of a saint. After a forceful and dramatic defense of the Truth, the first saint to shed his blood in the Christian dispensation crosses over to meet his Lord. But you see, "we sorrow not as others who have no hope" for we know that Stephen is "asleep in Jesus!" (1 Thessalonians 4:13-14).

The name "Stephen" means "wreath" or "crown," and it is appropriate that the first to win the martyr's crown should have worn such a name. It is said of Stephen in the NT that he was a man:

- Full of faith (Acts 6:5).
- Full of grace (Acts 6:8).
- Full of power (Acts 6:8).

Full of scripture (Acts 7).

Full of wisdom (Acts 6:3, 10).


Full of love (Acts 7:60).

The providence of God overrules the tragic event of Stephen’s death (1) by making it the occasion for the scattering of the church which was so necessary in the divine purpose and (2) by accomplishing through it (in all probability) the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, the mightiest figure, apart from Christ, in the entire NT. (Coffman 133-134).

There is one other loose end from this chapter that deserves some comment. There is some discussion among commentators as to how Luke receives his information about the speech of Stephen or the private meetings of the Sanhedrin. It is suggested by some (McGarvey, Vol. I 133; Bruce 172; and others) that perhaps Luke receives the facts of his account from Paul after he is converted. Paul would certainly have known the facts, being an eyewitness. But the witness of Paul is not needed for Luke to write a full and accurate account of the events. Luke writes by direct inspiration (2 Timothy 3:16). Luke gets his facts from God! See notes on Acts 4:16.

What a wonderful example of a great gospel preacher we have in this first Christian to die for the cause of Christ. Fearlessly he stands before this most intimidating of courts and defends Jesus with such conviction and boldness that even this hypocritical and calloused assembly cannot escape the truth of his words. Saul of Tarsus does not realize it now, but one day he will recall the events of this day and he will know STEPHEN WAS RIGHT!
A new direction in Luke’s account begins with this chapter. Thus far, he has dealt with the church in Jerusalem. He will now take another direction with a new focus as he gives an account of the dispersion of the Jerusalem church and the spread of the gospel to “all nations.” The enemies of Jesus have now set out on a course to attempt to exterminate His followers. They have tried the less violent and more ordinary means of dealing with this challenge; but the threats, imprisonments, and whippings have not worked. Instead of demoralizing this fledgling group of Christians, each attack seems to have pumped fresh energy and new, more determined resolve into their souls. Thus, like wicked men have done before and since, these enemies of Christianity have declared an all out purge upon God’s people.

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

And Saul was consenting unto his death: Saul, who later becomes the great Apostle Paul, not only approves of the murder of Stephen, but he is pleased by it. In the Greek, the word "consenting" has the meaning "to think well of ... to take pleasure with others in anything" (Vine, Vol. I 229).
Surely, the martyrdom of Stephen plays a part in the eventual conversion of Saul. It should be noted that Saul has a clear conscience and is sincere in his persecution of Christians. In spite of his sincerity in persecuting the church, he is sincerely wrong. He later says, "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth" (26:9). The lesson for us is that it is possible to have a clear conscience, to be sincere, and yet to be wrong. We must always be willing to test or try the way we are in. "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 16:25).

And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem: With the stoning of Stephen, a severe persecution against the church arises. This attempt to rid the world of Christianity is led by the Sanhedrin with both Pharisees and Sadducees joining forces. Ordinarily these two sects would be in opposition to each other. The hatred of Jesus and the opposition to truth historically have made strange bedfellows!

It is sad to have to ask the question, “What church is this “church at Jerusalem?” When these events were taking place, this question would not have been necessary. But today in the denominational system that exists, there are over one thousand institutions all claiming to be the church of the New Testament. This is an excellent place to ask, “To what church is Saul laying havoc? Is it the Roman Catholic Church? The answer is no. The Roman Catholic Church will not appear on the scene for at least another three hundred years. Is this the Lutheran Church? No, Martain Luther has not even been born yet. Is this the Methodist Church, Presbyterian Church, Baptist Church, or the Mormon Church? These churches cannot be the church under consideration because their founders, John Wesley, John Calvin, John Smith, and Joseph Smith will not even be born for several hundred years. The fact is none of today’s modern denominations are in existence when this passage is written. It will be fifteen hundred years before denominationalism begins in earnest. The church under
consideration is the church of Christ, the Lord’s Church, the ONE church of the New Testament (Matthew 16:18-19).

and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria: This attempt to smother the infant church results only in its being spread that much faster. The religious fervor, fired off by the death of Stephen and the ensuing persecution, causes the early disciples to go "every where preaching the word." In effect, the actions of the Jewish Sanhedrin release a fire storm of religious zeal that has been pent up in the hearts of God's people.

except the apostles: We are not told why the apostles do not flee Jerusalem, and it would be pure speculation to advance a reason. The one thing that is noteworthy is the fact that the first evangelism conducted by the early church is carried out by ordinary members of the church rather than by those we might consider as the "preachers." The apostles remain in Jerusalem while the gospel is being spread to the surrounding areas (see notes on 8:4).

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

It takes considerable courage to give an honorable burial to their first martyr, but the disciples are willing to bear the consequences; they are not cowards. It is Jewish law that one who is executed is not to be mourned. He is to be buried with "the burial of an ass" (Jeremiah 22:19). The disciples throw caution to the wind and make "great lamentation over him." Literally, they "beat their breast" in grief (Vincent 487).
3 As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.

As for Saul: Saul is known far and wide by Christians as an enemy of the church. This same man will become one of the New Testament heroes; but as for now, he is just Saul, the one to be feared. “Note the quiet introduction of the Apostle Paul. Uninspired writers would have stopped to give an extended biography of one so prominent. There is not the slightest trace of hero worship in an inspired writing. The only hero of the apostles was their Lord” (Walker 57).

he made havoc of the church: It is obvious Saul has no pity for the death of Stephen; instead he mounts a zealous attack on the church. The rage Saul has against the Lord’s church should not be underestimated. The word "havoc" "is commonly applied to wild beasts, to lions, wolves, etc., and denotes the devastations which they commit. Saul raged against the church like a wild beast..." (Barnes 429). Vincent says, “...it is used as the laying waste of a vineyard by the wild boar" (487). The NIV renders the passage, "Saul began to destroy the church." What a sad commentary; Saul in his own mention of these events said that he was "exceedingly mad against them" (26:11).

entering into every house: Saul’s zeal recognizes no bounds. He enters into "every house" in search of Christians. There is no way to escape this reign of terror except to flee the city.

and haling: Thayer says this word "haling" means to "draw or drag one (before the judge, to prison, to punishment ..)")(607-2-4951). Saul supervises the dragging of Christians to prison.
men and women committed them to prison: There is no distinction made between the sexes; they all suffer the rage of Saul. The fact that "women" are mentioned indicates the presence of prominent women in the church who are just as faithful to their convictions as are the men.

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

Because of this persecution, the "good news" is spread. The people spreading the gospel message are not necessarily officers of the church such as elders, deacons, evangelists, or preachers. They are disciples with the message of Jesus burning in their hearts. Everywhere they find refuge from the destruction of Saul, they teach the "word" of salvation. In the Lord's church, there is no distinction as "laity and clergy." All have the obligation to spread the gospel as they have scriptural opportunity and ability. Until every disciple today has the love for Christ and His gospel, as did our forefathers, we will never duplicate what they accomplished in fewer than thirty years.

But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world (Romans 10:18).

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

Then Philip: This Philip is one of the "seven" chosen in chapter six. His special calling to "wait tables" now ends with the dispersion of the church. He now becomes Philip the "evangelist" referred to by this title in 21:8.

went down: Luke's geography is correct. Although Philip traveled north, the land from Jerusalem slopes downward toward Samaria.
to the city of Samaria: It is quite interesting that the first effort in evangelism is to these Samaritans whom the Jews look upon with absolute contempt. They consider the Samaritans to be a polluted nation of half-Jews.

The Judaeans regard the Samaritans as racial and religious half-breeds because of the foreign settlers planted in Samaria by the Assyrians to take the place of the upper classes of the land who were deported at the time of the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel. Before long, these settlers abandon their former pagan worship and became indistinguishable from the Israelites among whom they dwelt, but their alien origin continues to be used by the Jews as a pretext for refusing to have any dealings with them (Bruce 176-177).

and preached Christ unto them: Christ is the theme of these first evangelists. They have no time for the social gospel so often heard today. Philip has tremendous results preaching Jesus (see notes on verses 12 and 35).

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

And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake: The city of Samaria is overwhelmed by the message of Philip. The Samaritan people, in mass, turn to the gospel.

hearing and seeing the miracles which he did: Through the "laying on of the apostles' hands," Philip receives the ability to work miracles (see notes on 6:6). He now uses this miraculous ability. The Samaritans not only hear the word but also see signs and great miracles to show the divine approval of the message (see notes on 2:17; 4:30).
7 For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed.

For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: Philip begins his spiritual housecleaning of the unclean spirits by exercising the power given by the laying on of hands of the apostles. He exorcizes unclean spirits out of many. Reese poses the following intriguing comment and question about “unclean spirits”:

One wonders if we are ignoring in the process the tremendous volume of references to these beings to be found in both the Old and New Testaments. The very thought of unseen agents of Satan involves a concept to which not a few are not willing to subscribe. Such things have no place in the age of scientific research and reason! Or do they? (Reese 191).

Demon possession is more than a mental or physical illness. Some have mistakenly thought those supposedly possessed with demons are actually sick. They are often thought to be epileptic. Although epilepsy often produces some of the same symptoms as demon possession, it is there that the similarity ends. It can be seen in this passage that the possession by "unclean spirits" is distinguished from illness such as "palsies." Jesus demonstrates His power over these agents of the devil; that power is now demonstrated by Philip when he also "casts out demons" (Matthew 12:22-29; 8:30-33).

Evidently, these demons do not leave their human hosts without a struggle. Luke says they "cried out with a loud voice." Perhaps they are affirming the Sonship of Jesus, as happened in Mark 3:11 and Luke 4:41, or perhaps they are expressing their devilish rage at being cast out.
and many taken with palsies: The term "palsies" is a general term that may include a number of diseases, such as paralysis of part of the body, an uncontrollable shaking, or frailties of the body in general.

and that were lame, were healed: Many who are crippled are also healed. It must be noted Philip experiences no failures in his attempts to heal, nor does he call for testimonies from those who are healed. Instead, he uses the miracles, which he performs by the power of God, to confirm his testimony.

8 And there was great joy in that city.

The coming of the gospel to the city of Samaria brings joy in at least three ways. First, the coming of the word of God into the lives of men always produces joy, both on earth and in heaven (Luke 15:10; 8:39). Secondly, the Samaritans can rejoice in the reunion with their kinsmen. The enmity between the Samaritans and those Jews who are now Christians is removed by the gospel of Christ. Third, many who are sick and afflicted in various ways are being healed. Samaria has reason to rejoice!

9 But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one:
But there was a certain man, called Simon: Here, we are introduced to one "Simon." He is also known as Simon the sorcerer or "Simon Magus." "Josephus mentions no less than twenty different Simons in his history, making this one of the most common names of antiquity, and imposing an intolerable burden upon any who would identify this Simon with any of those" (Coffman 155). There is much discussion as to the history of Simon after the events recorded here. Because this account contains all of the Biblical history revealed about this man, we will not enter into speculation.

which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria: Before the coming of Philip, Simon is the man to be dealt with in the city of Samaria. By the use of "sorcery," he has deceived the entire city.

Sorcery is the exercising of "the arts of the Magi, or magicians. ...those who made use of the knowledge of these arts for the purpose of imposing on mankind - astrologers, soothsayers, necromancers, fortune-tellers, etc. Such persons pretended to predict future events by the positions of the stars, and to cure diseases by incantations.... It was expressly forbidden the Jews to consult such persons on pain of death, Le. xix. 31; xx. 6 (Barnes 430).

The term, "bewitched" carries with it the idea that Simon has "amazed" (Vine, Vol. I 125) the people with his magical abilities.

giving out that himself was some great one: Simon is so good with his practice of the black arts that his own ego has become inflated to the point that he boasts that he is some "great one."
10 To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God.

It seems not only is Simon convinced of his position and power but he also has the whole city convinced. It is very common for ancient peoples to be brought under the delusions of crafty men. Because of his skills in his practice of deception, the Samaritans think Simon is the "great power of God."

Simon was an unqualified fraud; but, until the coming of the gospel, his evil influence dominated the whole city, "from least to the greatest." Nor does modern man have any right to despise the Samaritans for their gullibility, because there are many charlatans and deceivers receiving the adulation of their duped followers. It is only the word of God that "makes wise the simple," "opens the eyes of the blind," and provides a "lamp unto our feet." In direct proportion, therefore, as men are ignorant of the word of God, they become the prey of deceivers (Coffman 156).

The practice of deception continues in the more modern form of false teachers, faith healers, and various other religious frauds.

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

Not only is Simon skillful in the black magic that he works; he has, for an extended period of time, been successful in "amazing" the people of Samaria. It is against this background of entrenched ignorance that the gospel has one of its most brilliant hours (see notes on 8:9).
12 But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

May it forever be noted that when one preaches "Christ," as verse 5 tells us that Philip does, this preaching includes such things as preaching the kingdom or the church of God; preaching Jesus and his identity; and preaching the necessity of baptism for salvation. To preach Christ is to preach "all of the counsel of God" (20:27). This includes the facts, promises, and commandments of the gospel. Sermons that contain this type of information will save souls (see notes on verse 35).

But when they believed Philip: At the preaching of Philip, the scales fall off the eyes of the Samaritans, and they "believed" his word. Now they have "come out of darkness into the marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9) of Jesus Christ. The first step in man's salvation, upon hearing the word, is to believe (Mark 16:16; John 8:24; Romans 1:16; Hebrews 11:6).

preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God: Philip teaches "things concerning the kingdom of God." The term "kingdom of God" is often used interchangeably with the term "church." Jesus says, "upon this rock I will build my church"; in the next breath He says, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 16:18-19). In other words, when Jesus says He will build His church, He also tells Peter He will give him the keys to the church, the kingdom (see 17:7 for additional notes on the kingdom).

To show the distinction between the kingdom of God and the church, one might look at it this way. The kingdom of God includes more than the church. The kingdom includes heaven and all of its inhabitants, God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the host of heavenly angels, plus God's people on earth. God's people on earth are by definition, the ekklesia—the church. Thus, the kingdom includes the church, or the church is a part of the kingdom.
Unlike some who tell us the "kingdom" was established sometime around 1914 or yet by others who are still looking for the "kingdom" to be established, we know the Lord's kingdom was establish long before 1914. Jesus says His apostles will "not taste of death, til they have seen the kingdom of God come..." (Mark 9:1). Just as Jesus predicts, the kingdom or the church is established in the lifetime of the apostles. Paul and John both state that they are members of the kingdom (Colossians 1:13; Revelation 1:9).

**and the name of Jesus Christ:** Philip preaches the authority and identity of Jesus as Savior. This preaching most assuredly includes Jesus' life, death, burial, and resurrection.

**they were baptized:** In every instance of conversion in the book of Acts, baptism is always mentioned. The other steps in the conversion process are not always mentioned because the candidate may have already complied with one or more of the steps in the plan of salvation. In other words, if the subject is already a believer as was the case in Acts 2:38, it is not necessary to give the instruction to believe. If the subject is repentant, as the jailor in Acts 16:30-34, there is no need to command repentance. But "baptism" is always commanded. Why? Baptism is the one requirement no one has obeyed (see notes on 2:38).

Baptism is an absolute essential if one wants to be saved. This is the act of obedience that changes the alien sinner into one who is "such as should be saved" (Mark 16:16; 2:38; 22:16; Galatians 3:27; 1 Peter 3:21) (see notes on 2:38).

**both men and women:** The hearts of "both men and women" are touched by the gospel. One can only wonder if the Samaritan woman, with whom Jesus speaks at the well, comes to partake of the "water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:7-14).
13 Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.

Then Simon himself believed also: Never underestimate the power of the gospel! Simon, along with the citizenry of Samaria, is convinced of the truth of Philip's preaching. One can only imagine how this master of sleight of hand and deceit must have felt when he witnesses the true "signs and wonders" as performed by Philip.

Luke plainly shows that there was no difference between the faith of Simon and that of the other people in Samaria. It says "Simon ALSO himself BELIEVED." He believed the same thing that the others believed, and he was baptized, as were the others. Not only did he have the kind of faith that motivated to action, but he continued in the fellowship of Philip, the preacher (Reese 259).

Those of the "once saved always saved" persuasion will have us believe that Simon is not a "true believer." The reason they will deny the faith of Simon is obvious: here is an example of an obedient believer who "falls from the grace of God." Peter tells Simon in verse 22, "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness. ..." One can see, as Simon saw, a child of God can fall and be once again "in the bond of iniquity" (verse 23).

and when he was baptized: Baptism is the desired result of "believing." Simon realizes that "faith only" will not save him. His faith motivates him to be baptized "for the remission of (his) sins." At this point, Simon is in a saved condition; Jesus says so: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). Wonder of wonders, Simon, once the child of darkness, is now a Christian, walking in the light (see notes on 2:38)!
he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done: Brother Simon continues in the company of Philip, being truly amazed at the wonders he performs.

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

The success of the gospel in Samaria is soon relayed back to the apostles who have remained in Jerusalem. The apostles dispatch Peter and John to Samaria. "The purpose of this apostolic mission to Samaria was evidently to qualify certain men for the leadership through the laying on of the apostles' hands and the accompanying endowment of them with miraculous powers" (Coffman 162).

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

When Peter and John arrive in Samaria, they pray that the brethren "might receive the Holy Ghost." There are those who would use this verse in an attempt to disallow the "gift of the Holy Spirit" promised to "every one" who repents and is baptized (2:38). It has already been shown, in our study of Acts 2:38, "every one of you" who repents and is baptized shall receive "the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit." Therefore, since the Samaritans have obeyed the gospel, just like the people on Pentecost day in Acts 2:38, they have also received the "remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit." Does anyone believe the Samaritans did not receive the remission of sins when they were baptized? There is no mention of the remission of sins. But we all know the Samaritans received the remission of sins. By the same logic we can also know they received the gift of the Holy Spirit. This gift is the personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit as promised to every Christian (2:38-39).
Since the Samarians receive the "gift of the Holy Spirit" when they are baptized, the apostles have something else in mind when they pray for the Holy Spirit to "fall upon" Samaria.

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

Since the Samaritans receive the promised "gift of the Holy Spirit" when they are baptized, what is being talked about when Luke says, He [the Holy Spirit] “was fallen upon none of them?” Luke is using the term "Holy Spirit" to refer to the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:1-11; Hebrews 2:4).

“That they might receive the Holy Spirit..." has reference to receiving the Holy Spirit in miraculous measure, because, having been baptized, they had already received the gift ordinary of the Holy Spirit as Peter promised on Pentecost (Acts 2:38) (Coffman 163).

As soon as the apostles heard of Philip's good work in Samaria they sent Peter and John. But we ask "for what purpose?" What they did when they arrived would determine why they were sent. When they arrived they prayed and laid hands upon the Samaritans; through this means these received the special gifts of the Holy Spirit. This action was necessary because the Samaritans had only been baptized in water into Christ. They had then consequently only received the "gift of the Holy Spirit" (2:38) or the (indwelling personality of the Holy Spirit). The Holy Spirit in His miraculous powers had not "fallen upon" any of them. Luke uses the term "fallen upon" to describe the reception of the special powers. ... we must say the use of the term "Holy Spirit" in 15b is synonymous with "spiritual gifts." Nor is this unusual for there are other examples where the cause is placed for the effect" (De Welt 109).
The explanation that best harmonizes with the data in Acts, as well as in other New Testament references, is that the believers receive the Spirit when they were baptized. Then the apostles went to Samaria to lay hands upon the new converts so that the spiritual gifts might be conferred upon them (Gaertner 147).

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

These miraculous gifts of the Spirit could be conveyed only by the "laying on of the apostles' hands." In spite of the fact that Philip can do miraculous wonders, a gift he himself has received through "the laying on of the apostles' hands" (6:5-6), he cannot pass on these gifts.

As McGarvey reasons, "Seeing that this extraordinary gift of the Spirit was not necessary to the conversion and pardon of these persons, nor to the indwelling of the Spirit, it is proper to inquire for what purpose it was bestowed" (144). It should be remembered that the church is still very much in its infancy. The New Testament has not been written down. It is just in the process of being revealed. Therefore, in order for these fledgling churches to survive, God provides these special gifts to inspire the word, confirm the doctrine, ferret out false teachers, interpret tongues, and build up the church in general.

These gifts served a temporary purpose, until the facts, doctrine, commandments and promises of the new covenant were committed to writing by inspired men, when the prophecies, tongues, and miraculous knowledge of individual teachers gave place to the written word (McGarvey, Vol. I 145).

But when that which was perfect is come, then that which was in part shall be done away (1 Corinthians 12:10).
Miraculous gifts served as a type of night light to get the church through a very dark time to the brilliant light of the completely revealed word of God. Sadly, there are those who, in spite of the complete revelation of the light of God's word, still want to keep the night light. When the New Testament is completely written down, the purpose of miracles ceases (1 Corinthians 13:8) (see notes on 2:17; 4:30).

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

And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given: Not every Christian in Samaria receives miraculous gifts. This does not happen in any church. Certain ones are selected to receive these gifts in order to further the work of the Lord's church as has been noted. Simon soon becomes aware it is the unique ability of the apostles to transfer this power of the Holy Spirit. He can see it is by the "laying on of the apostles' hands" this gift is given. Therefore, it is obvious this reception of the Holy Spirit is accompanied by external signs (something Simon could see). These visual signs distinguish these special gifts of the Holy Spirit from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit received by all Christians.

he offered them money: Brother Simon, like many new converts, has difficulty in overcoming old habits. It is customary to purchase secrets of magic and evidently Simon thinks the power of God can be bought. An interesting term is derived from Simon's attempt to make this purchase. It is called "simony," which is defined as "the act of buying or selling ecclesiastical preferment, ecclesiastical pardons, or other things regarded as sacred or spiritual" (Webster 1692).
19 Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.

Little does Simon know that the ability to pass on these miraculous endowments cannot be bought, neither can the apostles give Simon the "power" to pass them on to anyone else. The ability to pass on spiritual gifts is limited to the apostles, as is made evident in the fact that Philip can work wonders, but he has not the "power" to pass this ability to anyone else. If Philip could have given the gift, the mission of Peter and John would have been unnecessary.

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

The fiery Apostle Peter does not hesitate in his condemnation of Simon's sinful proposal. Peter also lets Simon know he has put his soul in jeopardy by saying, "Thy money perish with thee."

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

Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: If this statement is kept in context, it means Simon has no part in the miraculous powers of the Holy Spirit much less bestowing the Holy Spirit on others.
for thy heart is not right in the sight of God: Those of the "once saved always saved" persuasion, who cannot come to grips with the fact that Simon is a Christian, try to make these words mean Simon's heart has never been right in the sight of God. "There is, of course, an ocean of difference between saying that a man's heart is not right (present tense), and the declaration that it had never been right" (Coffman 165).

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

Here is the final unimpeachable proof that Simon is a Christian.

If Simon had not been a backslider from the faith, but had been an alien hypocrite pretending a faith and submission to a baptism which were worthless, Peter would never have commanded him to repent and pray, these very commandments standing here as an apostolic confirmation of the fact that Simon was in possession of a covenant relationship with God through Jesus Christ, despite the fact of his sin. The door here opened for Simon's return is the same that must be entered by all Christians who, when overtaken by sin, seek to return to the Lord  (Coffman 166).

It is here that we come to understand what is commonly referred to as the "second law of pardon." There are those who ask the question, "If you believe that baptism is for the remission of sins, and a Christian sins, why is it not necessary to baptize the Christian again?" The answer is when one submits to the gospel and is baptized for the remission of his sins, he is also born into the family of God. Baptism is the birth of "water and of Spirit" that Jesus tells Nicodemus about in John 3. When a Christian makes a mistake and commits a sin, he does not have to be rebaptized ("born again"). He needs to be baptized (born) only once; then as a child of God, the Christian is on speaking terms with his heavenly Father. When a Christian
sins If he will repent of his sins and ask God's forgiveness, God has promised to forgive him (James 5:16; 1 John 2:1). The conclusion must not be overlooked: for an erring Christian, it will not do him one whit of good to be rebaptized; he must meet the "second law of pardon," repent, and pray for his forgiveness.

What is indicated by the word "perhaps"? Is Peter saying there is a chance God will not forgive Simon? Absolutely not! If Simon will repent and ask God's forgiveness, God is "faithful and just to forgive" (1 John 1:9). If any doubts are expressed by "perhaps," they are whether or not Simon will repent.

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

For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness: Peter warns Simon that he is in the "gall of bitterness." Gall is a yellowish-green secretion from the liver and is used to describe anything that is very bitter. Reese says, "...this is a Hebraism; the usual mode of expressing the superlative –'You are in the bitterness of bitterness'." (262).

and in the bond of iniquity: This description of Simon is explicit and leaves no doubt as to his spiritual condition. Simon is once again in the grip of sin.

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

There are those who would make Simon to be a hypocrite in this whole matter. This simply is not the case.
Simon saw the danger that he was in; evidently he repented and prayed God, and even asked Peter to pray for him, as though his own prayer was not sufficient to obtain forgiveness. Simon is anxious to escape the penalty for his sin, and hopes that Peter can avert it; Peter had by the Holy Spirit diagnosed his case correctly. Simon was a converted man, but was in sin at this point. We are led to believe that Simon surely repented and corrected his life (Boles 131).

Here the curtain drops on the life of Simon, the once-upon-a-time sorcerer who beguiled the hearts of Samaria. Simon yields his dark arts to the "power of God unto salvation" and becomes a born-again Christian. The conversion of this powerful wizard is a milestone in demonstrating the power of God over the power of deceit. What happens to Simon from here? We have no scripture, and anything we might say would be speculation. For this reason we feel as McGarvey, "It is not wise to fill the memory with idle tales in regard to Biblical characters" (149). This notable character is a most remarkable man who sees many things the whole world needs to see. Here is a brief summary of what Simon sees:

1. Simon sees the difference between the genuine miracles performed by the power of God and the frauds he professes.
2. Simon sees that the kingdom of God, the church, is already established.
3. Simon sees he needs to believe and be baptized in order to be become a Christian.
4. Simon sees that the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit are given by the laying on of the apostles' hands.
(5) Simon sees that a child of God can fall from grace.

(6) Simon sees that the erring Christian must repent and pray for the forgiveness of sins.

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

The special mission of Peter and John has been accomplished. The Samaritan Christians now have the much-needed gifts of the Holy Spirit vested in certain of their membership so that the works of the church may move forward. The apostles preaching in “many villages” as they make their return to Jerusalem. This coming of the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit also frees Philip to leave Samaria and continue the Lord's work in other fields, as we will soon see.

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

And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying: A messenger from God speaks to Philip with fresh instructions for a new work.

Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza: From the city of Samaria, Philip is instructed to begin a providential trip that will bring him in contact with a man in need of conversion. Philip is told to go south to intercept the "way" (road) that goes from Jerusalem to Gaza. The timing of this event shows God is in control. According to McGarvey, Philip "by a journey of nearly fifty miles" comes to the road that leads from Jerusalem to Gaza (151). This point of intersection is only a few miles from Jerusalem; therefore, Philip has to leave at least a full day before the Ethiopian in order to
make the connection. By the providence of God, the conversion of this man of Ethiopia and the spread of the gospel into a foreign country are about to happen.

**which is desert:** The word "desert," as used by the angel, does not mean a barren waste land devoid of water as one often thinks, but rather the meaning is a place of little population. Vine defines the word as "primarily a solitude, an uninhabited place in contrast to a town or village..." (Vol. I 297). The event about to be described is going to take place in this desolate place.

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

**And he arose and went:** Philip, being the faithful evangelist he is, does not hesitate. He begins his trip south out of Samaria toward the road that leads to Gaza.

**and, behold, a man of Ethiopia:** In New Testament times, the country of Ethiopia was rich and productive because of its location on the Nile River. Reese describes the geography of the country:

Ethiopia was one of the great kingdoms of Africa. Ethiopia lay south of Egypt, on the Nile River. It was bounded on the north by Egypt, on the east by the Red Sea and Indian Ocean, on the south by the (then) unknown regions of the interior of Africa, and on the west by Libya and the great Libyan deserts (265).
an eunuch: According to Deuteronomy 23:1, a man who was a "eunuch" was not allowed full religious privileges enjoyed by other Jews. Perhaps the account of the conversion of this eunuch is to show that in Christianity no such distinction is to made between men.

of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure: This man is not some insignificant fellow but rather a man of influence and position in Ethiopia. He is the queen's treasurer. "Candace" is a title given to all the queens of Ethiopia as Pharaoh is the title given to all the kings of Egypt.

and had come to Jerusalem for to worship: There is some discussion as to whether this man is a natural born Jew or a proselyte to the Jewish religion or even as some suggest, a "God fearing Gentile." From the scriptural evidence given, the eunuch could not have been a "God fearing Gentile" because Peter has not yet preached to the Gentiles. According to the promise of Jesus in Matthew 16:18-19, Peter is given "the keys of the kingdom of heaven," the keys being the gospel. The promise is that Peter will be the first to use the keys (preach the gospel) to both Jews and Gentiles. This promise is fulfilled beginning with Peter’s preaching to the Jews on Pentecost in chapter two and completed when Peter is called to preach to the house of Cornelius in chapter ten. The first Gentile convert is Cornelius. What a great honor: Peter is the first man to preach the gospel to both Jews and Gentiles. There is no reason to believe the eunuch is not a Jew.

History reveals there was "a colony of Jews in Ethiopia ... and it is not uncommon for Jews born and reared in foreign lands to attain eminent positions such as this man enjoyed, and especially in the department of finance, for which the Jewish people have always seemed to enjoy natural fitness (Reese 266).
This man has traveled all the way to Jerusalem to worship God under the Old Testament law. One can only imagine the difficulties encountered in such a pilgrimage. This is a trip of approximately fifteen hundred miles. It is estimated it could have taken as long as two months to complete. Think of the heat, desert winds, cold nights, rain, dust, and all other unforeseen calamities that might accompany such a trip.

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

The eunuch is returning home to Ethiopia riding in what might be described as a streamlined wagon, called a chariot. This type of vehicle was capable of ten to fifteen miles per day, which allowed much time for reading. The eunuch is reading from the writings of the Prophet Isaiah (Esaias is the Greek word for Isaiah), and he is reading exactly at the right place, a prophecy declaring the sufferings of Jesus. What an opportunity for a preacher!

Here is what we have learned about this nobleman from Ethiopia:

(1) He is a Jew, having traveled all the way to Jerusalem to worship God.
(2) He is probably an honest man as he is given charge over the queen's money.
(3) He is very religious, having traveled such a distance to worship.
(4) He is a Bible reader with an humble spirit and a desire to learn.
(5) He wants to know about Jesus.
(6) Despite all of this, he is in a lost condition spiritually.

Here is a good, honest, important, zealous, religious man with a desire to know God's word, but he is still in a lost condition. None of these qualities will save his soul: he needs to know about Jesus. It is no wonder God acted providentially to bring a preacher to this man: He wanted the door of eternal life to be opened unto him.
29 Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.

Imagine this setting: Philip walks up to this crossroad, and there goes the chariot with the eunuch. Philip is waiting for further orders from God when the Spirit speaks to him and says, "Go near, and join thyself to this chariot." As has been observed, only God could have orchestrated such a meeting.

The Holy Spirit seems to be indicated here; whether the Holy Spirit spoke directly to Philip or through the angel, we are not told. It should be pointed out the part played in this conversion by these messengers of God. Both the angel and the Spirit speak only to the preacher; they do not speak to or in any way work directly upon the sinner. There are those today who think salvation is premised upon the visitation of the Holy Spirit or angels or some better-felt-than-told experience. With the one exception of Cornelius (which is a special case that will be discussed later, chapter 10), this idea is without precedent and without truth in the scriptures. "The gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16).

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

And Philip ran thither to him: It would appear the chariot has already passed by the point where Philip intercepts the road. At the instruction of the Spirit, Philip now must run to overtake this nobleman from Ethiopia. It might help today if we had more preachers willing to do some “running” to preach the gospel.
and heard him read the prophet Esaias: The eunuch is reading the prophesy of Isaiah out loud. Bruce says:

Reading in ancient times was almost invariably aloud. Why this should be so will be apparent to anyone who tries to read a copy of ancient manuscript; the words require to be spelt out, and this is done more easily aloud than in silence" (187).

and said, Understandest thou what thou readest: This is a great opening for a religious discussion. This man is interested in the scriptures, and Philip is ready to teach him.

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

The eunuch could have been offended by this abrupt question posed by Philip. Instead, we see the honest heart and sincere desire he has to know God's will. The Ethiopian expresses the desire to have Philip teach him. If only the whole world had the attitude of this man!

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

The place of the scripture which he read was this: The "place" from which the eunuch is reading is Isaiah 53:7-8. He could not have selected a better place to be reading. This prophetic passage in Isaiah 53 describes the Suffering Servant. This prophecy is fulfilled in the death of Jesus. Walker says, "No Jewish rabbi could then, nor can he yet, interpret that passage. It is the finest single prophecy of the Old Testament from which to preach Jesus" (60).
He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so
opened he not his mouth: This prophetic description of Jesus certainly is fulfilled when Jesus
patiently yields himself to be put to death by wicked men.

Jesus meekly submitted to the outrages perpetrated against himself, offering no more
resistance than a lamb, either sheared or slaughtered. The appropriateness of this
simile is seen in the contrast between goats and sheep. A goat, for example,
slaughtered in the traditional manner, responds with blood-chilling cries that may be
heard a mile away; but a sheep submits to the butcher’s knife without a whimper
(Coffman 172).

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

In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: Although Jesus is determined to be
innocent by His Roman judges, His innocence draws no pity from the Jewish mob demanding
His crucifixion. Therefore, His judgment of innocence is “taken away,” and He is crucified.

and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth: "Who shall
declare his generation?” Thayer says these words mean, "who can describe the wickedness
of the present generation" (112-1-1074)? Taken in light of the last phrase, the question is,
realizing that Jesus has been taken from the earth, who shall describe the wickedness of the
generation in which He lived?
Who will remember this generation of wicked men "who resisted every word of the Saviour, who mocked him, hated him, denied the signs he performed before their very eyes, suborned witnesses to swear lies at his trials, rejected the verdict of innocence announced by the governor, and through political blackmail, mob violence, and personal intimidation of the governor demanded and received his crucifixion?" (Coffman 172).

The “wicked generation” of Jesus’ day is remembered and preached by every faithful preacher beginning with Peter on Pentecost, the first martyr Stephen, here the evangelist Philip, later the great Apostle Paul, and countless saints through the ages, even until this very day. All who have the courage to “preach Jesus” have exposed the wicked men who crucified Jesus.

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

Is the prophet speaking about himself or some other man? It seems the man from Ethiopia has a desperation about him when he asks this question. One can very well suspect the eunuch realizes there is more to this prophecy than any Jewish rabbi has ever explained to him.

There is no evidence that between the time of Isaiah and the time of Christ anyone had identified the Suffering servant of Isaiah 53 with the Davidic Messiah of Isaiah 11 or with the "one like unto the Son of man" (Dan. 7:13); but Jesus identified them and fulfills them (Bruce 188).
35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture: It is very likely Philip has previously used this text in Isaiah to preach Jesus. Philip wastes no time in getting to the subject that will lead this man to salvation.

and preached unto him Jesus: As has been previously noted, a better place could not be found to "preach Jesus" than chapter 53 of Isaiah. This is the same theme Philip preached to the Samaritans in verse five, and it should be the theme of all disciples who will be successful soul winners.

It should also be remembered that to preach Christ involves telling men of their need to believe in Jesus, to repent of their sins, to confess the fact that Jesus is the Son of God, and to be baptized for the remission of their sins as well as any and all other doctrine that pertains to the commands, responsibilities, or promises of the gospel (see notes on verse 12).

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

And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: The area where this event is taking place, although described as “desert” (see notes on verse 26), has plenty of water available.
The first natural water to which they came, unless it were a spring on the wayside, was the brook which flows through the valley of Elah, the brook which David crossed in going forth to meet Goliath. It is a mountain stream, which goes dry in the summer, but flows with a strong current through the winter and the spring. Such streams always wear out pools here and there very suitable for baptizing. If the chariot had already crossed this stream when the eunuch requested baptism, there was another in the Philistine plain, now called Wady el Hasy, which Robinson, the first to institute any intelligent inquiries on this subject, fixed upon as the place of baptism. It is a perennial stream, and suitable for baptizing at any season of the year. It is not at all improbable, however, that the real place of this baptism was one of the many artificial pools with which the country abounded at that time, and the ruins of which are found in every section (McGarvey, Vol. I 157).

and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized: When one preaches Jesus, he preaches baptism in water for the remission of sins. Upon seeing this "certain water," the eunuch is reminded of what Philip has already taught him and immediately requests baptism. The baptism taught by Philip is not a baptism in the Spirit as some will maintain but baptism in water. Baptism in water is the "one" baptism required of those who desire to be saved (Ephesians 4:5) (see notes on 2:38).

We will note, as we proceed through the book of Acts, no inspired preacher ever "preached Jesus" without preaching baptism in water as Jesus commands. No gospel preacher today can preach Jesus without preaching the same command to be baptized. If one professes to be preaching Jesus and no one ever requests baptism, the facts become obvious: he is not preaching Jesus!
37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest: There is some question among scholars as to whether this statement by Philip is actually in the original text.

Verse 37 is left out of the Standard Version, but a footnote is inserted, saying that "some ancient authorities insert, wholly or in part, verse 37." It was found in one manuscript in the latter half of the second century, as it was quoted by "Irenaeus," who was active from the year A.D. 170 to A.D. 210. It is supposed that this verse was written in the margin and later was transcribed as a part of the original text. Even if the verse be an interpolation, and should be left out, it does not change in any way the thought; nothing is added by retaining the verse so far as doctrine is concerned, and nothing certainly is lost by omitting the verse. However, the early records that contain it show that very early in the history of the church such a question was asked and such an answer was given (Boles 138-139).

And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God: Here is a man who has been all the way from Ethiopia to Jerusalem to worship God as directed under the Old Testament. He needs to know Jesus as his Saviour. He has just heard Jesus preached. How is Philip to know whether this stranger is a believer in Jesus or not? This Ethiopian nobleman from the depths of his heart makes this blessed statement, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." “For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Romans 10:10).
Chapter 8

Are there any more questions? This man is now ready to be baptized. The pattern established in this example was practiced by Christians in the first century and is practiced right on up to this day. In response to the question, "what do you believe," the candidate for baptism makes the same "good confession" the eunuch made. Jesus explains in Matthew 10:32: “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.”

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

And he commanded the chariot to stand still: Someone suggested this statement indicates an attendant is driving and perhaps there are several others in the chariot. This situation could have been the case, but it may have very well been a simple matter of the eunuch’s commanding "whoa!"

and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him: What sentence structure could have been used in Greek or English to give us a better understanding of what happened? "They went down both into the water ... they came up out of the water." In this scriptural example, there is no mistake as to the mode of baptism. There is no place in this example for sprinkling or pouring. The eunuch is immersed in water. Baptism by its very definition means "to immerse" (Wigram-Green 114).

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

And when they were come up out of the water: After Philip baptizes the eunuch, they both come up out of the water.
the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: The Greek word for "caught away" is harpazo, which means "to snatch or catch away" (Vine, Vol. I 174). Some would make this catching away of Philip a miraculous event as when Elijah was caught away in 1 Kings 18. It is most likely the Spirit "caught away" Philip in the same way he was brought to the eunuch; the Spirit gave Philip instructions to go to some other location.

and he went on his way rejoicing: Philip has certainly produced joy in his preaching of Jesus. It is no wonder the eunuch is now rejoicing. Just a short time ago, he was riding along puzzling over a passage of scripture he did not understand; now, not only does he understand, but he is a beneficiary of the "Suffering Servant" that was revealed to him by the preacher Philip. This man has every reason to be happy.

This chapter is a vivid demonstration of the grand purpose of the book of Acts, that purpose being the preaching of the gospel to persuade men to become Christians. Following is the basic procedure that will be observed in every single act of conversion:

(1) They hear the word of God.
(2) They believe the word.
(3) They repent of their sins.
(4) They confess Jesus as the Son of God.
(5) They are baptized in water for the remission of sins.
(6) They rejoice!

This is the only way for any person to be saved.
40 But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.

"Azotus" is the name for the ancient city of the Philistines, "Ashdod." This city was about twenty miles north of Gaza and about thirty-five miles from Jerusalem. Some will place emphasis upon the word "found" to prove further the idea of a miraculous "catching away." Whether this information proves anything or not, Philip continues his preaching in Azotus and all the cities between there and Caesarea. In Caesarea, Philip takes up residency and becomes known as "Philip the evangelist," as well he was (21:8).
Chapter 9

With this chapter we have a very important transition in the book of Acts. This chapter chronicles the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, a vicious enemy of the Lord's church, who becomes the great Apostle Paul. The remainder of the book is primarily occupied with an account of Paul's labors and trials in establishing churches and preaching the gospel throughout the Gentile world.

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

And Saul: Luke does not begin by telling us much about Saul; he will give more information as the narrative progresses. It will be of beneficial to have a brief background on Saul, a person who is to have a great impact on the spread of the gospel. The following facts of Saul's heritage, birth, and early training serve him well as a preacher of "the good news."

(1) Saul is a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin. As he describes himself in Philippians 3:5, he is a Hebrew of Hebrews. Saul is as "Jewish" as you can get, being from a long line of pure Hebrews. Saul's parents are Pharisees; therefore, Saul is raised under the strictest of Biblical interpretations, being taught the traditions of the Pharisees (23:6; 26:5).

(2) Saul is born in Tarsus of Cilicia (22:3). "Tarsus was a seat of Greek learning, almost rivaling Athens and Alexandria" (Reese 276). It is in this environment of appreciation for higher education that Saul is raised.
Saul is highly educated. As a youth, he is instructed in the highest arts of Greek culture as well as the finest points of Jewish education. In his higher education, he "sat at the feet" of the most noted teacher of his day, an educator named Gamaliel (22:3). Saul's aptitude for formal instruction is best described by himself, "I advanced in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers" (Galatians 1:14).

Saul is trained in a trade. Not only does he have the benefits of formal education; but as customary with every Jewish boy, he is taught a trade. Saul learns the craft of tent making (18:3). "The fact that he afterward received an expensive intellectual education proves that his father put him to this humble trade, not through necessity, but in compliance with the Jewish conception, that some form of manual labor was an important part of the education of every boy" (McGarvey, Vol. I 166). The wisdom of this training serves Saul well in his subsequent life.

Saul is a Roman citizen. Saul declares he is born a Roman citizen (22:27-28). To be a citizen of the Roman Empire carried with it certain rights and privileges that prove to be a very important asset to Saul.

yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord: The emotions expressed in "breathing out threatenings and slaughter" give us some idea of the murderous fervor in which Saul pursues his attempts to exterminate Christianity. It seems he is no longer satisfied with the havoc he has caused among the Lord's people in Jerusalem; he is ready to capture, charge, and execute Christians in any city where they may be found (see notes on 8:3).
For Saul, the attempt to purge the world of this religious "sect" that has dared to challenge the Jewish world becomes a personal vendetta. One can see that Saul’s zeal can be a driving force for good if only that zeal can be pointed in the right direction; amazingly, that is exactly what is soon to happen.

**went unto the high priest:** Saul goes to the high priest for the necessary authority to carry out his mission. Under ordinary circumstances, the letters carried by Saul would have no authority in a foreign city such as Damascus, but it seems apparent the authorities in Damascus are in sympathy with the Jews. This sympathy becomes even more obvious when the governor of Damascus aids the Jews in an attempt to apprehend Saul after his conversion (2 Corinthians 11:32).

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

**And desired of him letters:** All Saul lacks, before he begins this mission of mayhem, is official sanction from the high priest.

The high priest of Jerusalem would, by virtue of his office, have jurisdiction over the Jews of all synagogues. Hence, Saul went to the high priest that he might secure letters that would grant him authority to go into the synagogues of Damascus and ferret out all the disciples of the Way, whether men or women. Saul intended to treat those of Damascus as criminals. He hoped to bring them bound in chains to Jerusalem. Such arrests were not ordinarily permitted in a foreign city. They could be carried out here because the governor of the district was in sympathy with such action (De Welt 120).
to Damascus to the synagogues: Damascus is one of the oldest cities in the world, perhaps the oldest. The history of this ancient city dates all the way back to Abraham (Genesis 15:2). Barnes describes Damascus as follows:

This was a celebrated city of Syria, and long the capital of a kingdom of that name. It is situated in a delightful region about one hundred and twenty miles north-east of Jerusalem, and about one hundred and ninety miles south-east of Antioch. It is in the midst of an extensive plain, abounding with cypress and palm-trees, and extremely fertile... The city, situated in a delightful climate, in a fertile country, is perhaps among the most pleasant in the world. It is called by the Orientals themselves the paradise on earth... The road from Jerusalem to Damascus lies between two mountains, not above one hundred paces distant from each other; both are round at the bottom and terminate in a point. That nearest the great road is called Cocab, the star, in memory of the dazzling light which is here said to have appeared to Saul (436).

It is from this beautiful city that Saul of Tarsus is soon to experience a reversal in his life that will change him from being the vicious adversary of Christianity into a zealous advocate of the very cause that he once persecuted.

that if he found any of this way: Luke frequently uses the term "the Way" to describe the Christian life (19:9,23; 22:4; 24:14-22). He also speaks of "the way of salvation" (16:17) and "the way of the Lord" (18:25). This designation is taken from the words of Jesus in John 14:6. It should be noted this is a singular "Way": there are not thousands of "ways" to be saved, neither is it true we are "all going to heaven just by different ways." There is "the Way" as prescribed by Jesus in His word. This is the only "Way."

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber (John 10:1).
Everyone should check the way he is following on a regular basis to be very certain he is truly in "the Way" that leads to everlasting life. The destiny of his eternal soul is at risk. The wise man says, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 16:25). Every person is responsible to check the way he is in, be certain to have a "thus saith the Lord" for the things he believes and practices.

**Whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem:** The rage mounted against the church has succeeded only in scattering Christianity throughout the world. Damascus is no exception; "the Way" has also taken root in this historic city. The exasperation of Saul and his fellow persecutors is fueled to new heights; it now becomes the all-consuming quest of Saul to quench this outbreak of Christian fire in Damascus.

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

**And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus:** This mad mission of murder that Saul has embarked on is ordinarily a journey of five to seven days. It is about noon (midday) as Saul and his entourage draws near the city of Damascus (22:6; 26:13).

**and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:** Saul's expedition is halted in mid-stride by a blinding light that is so intensely brilliant it outshines the brightness of the midday sun in the Syrian desert. As always, the skeptics and naysayers who would deny the resurrection of Jesus have tried to explain away this miraculous event as an attack of epilepsy, a sunstroke, a hallucination, or a sudden lightning storm. All doubts may be laid to rest. This brilliance is nothing short of the appearance of the risen Christ!
4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

And he fell to the earth: The bright light that flashes from heaven literally strikes Saul to the ground. We learn later, from additional facts provided in Acts 26:14, the entire company with Saul falls to the ground. Thus, the explanation that this is some natural happening that befalls Saul, i.e. sunstroke, epilepsy, etc., is laid to rest.

and heard a voice saying unto him: This mystery voice that speaks to Saul addresses him in the "Hebrew tongue" (26:14).

Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me: The mystery speaker will soon be revealed as Jesus. Deductions made from the question here asked by Jesus have extensive implications. Saul has been engaged in the persecution of the disciples of Christ; yet Jesus asks, "why persecutest thou me?" The conclusion can be drawn:

- When one persecutes the church, he persecutes Christ.
- When one opposes the church, he opposes Christ.
- When one loves the church, he loves Christ.
- When one works for the church, he works for Christ.

The church is the spiritual body of Christ. Whatever is done to Christ’s church is done to Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23). Woe be unto the man who would despise the Lord’s church!
5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

And he said, Who art thou, Lord: The voice, just as the light, comes out of heaven, but who is speaking? Saul wastes no time in an attempt to determine who has spoken to him. "The word 'Lord' here, as is frequently the case in the New Testament, means no more than 'sir' Jn. iv. 19. It is evident that Saul did not as yet know that this was the Lord Jesus" (Barnes 437).

And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: The thoughts that must have raced through the mind of Saul can only be guessed at.

Up to this moment he had held Jesus to be an impostor cursed of God and man, and his followers blasphemers worthy of death; but now this hated being is suddenly revealed to him in a blaze of divine glory. The evidence of eyes and ears can not be doubted. There he stands, with the light of heaven and the glory of God around him, and he says, “I am Jesus” (McGarvey, Vol. I 171).

“I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth” (Acts 26:9).

In this visible perception of Jesus, Saul has satisfied another much-needed prerequisite for his new calling. To qualify as an apostle, one must have been an eyewitness to the resurrection of Jesus. Although Paul describes himself as "one born out of due time" (1 Corinthians 15:3-8), he is no less qualified than the original Twelve. Paul declares, "I have seen Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Corinthians 9:1). Ananias says, "Jesus appeared unto thee [Paul] in the way" (9:17) (see notes on 1:22).
it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks: The "pricks" is perhaps better described as a goad that was made by binding a sharp piece of iron to the end of a heavy stick. This created a rather imposing tool. Shamgar, an Old Testament hero, slew six hundred Philistines with an ox goad (Judges 3:31). This goad was used to encourage a slow and balky ox to move along at a quicker pace. The expression "to kick against the goad" describes the action of an untrained or stubborn ox that kicked the goad and in the process only hurt himself. This was the description of Saul in his rebellion against Jesus; in reality, he hurt no one but himself.

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

And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do: In spite of the trepidation Saul is feeling, his honest heart comes to the front, his own pride is subdued, he realizes his guilt, and he is ready to submit to the will of Jesus. STEPHEN WAS RIGHT (see notes on 7:60)!

And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do: Jesus instructs Saul to go into Damascus, and there he would be told "what thou must do." The question is, "Must do" to accomplish what? The answer is what he "must do" to be saved!

The instructions Saul receives will be neither unessential nor optional, but mandatory. In the retelling of this event (Acts 22:16), Luke records the commandment given to Saul. It reads:

And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord 22:16).
In the light of these facts, what an incredible folly is the theological nonsense that would make baptism into Christ either optional or unessential for those who would be saved!

"Must..." This is a big word in the NT; ... In the passage before us it reveals baptism as one of the `musts' regarding salvation. The familiar heresies setting aside this divine `must'should be rejected (Coffman 182).

Many in the denominational world would tell us that Saul is saved at the very moment of this miraculous event on the Damascus road. No one will dispute that Saul has had what denominationalism has coined a "Damascus road experience." This is the original "Damascus road experience!" Saul has seen a light from heaven. He has heard a voice, the voice of Jesus. But if Saul is saved, he does not know it. He asks "What would you have me do?" If Saul is saved, Jesus does not know it because Jesus tells Saul to go into the city where he will be "told what he must do." Saul will spend three days in fasting and prayer, but he will remain in an unsaved condition until he obeys "what he must do" as instructed by a preacher named Ananias. What Saul "must do" is to obey the gospel, being baptized in water to "wash away his sins" (22:16; Romans 1:16). Again, the means of salvation becomes clear: if one desires to be saved, he "must" hear the gospel, believe it, repent of past sins, confess Jesus, and be baptized for the remission of sins. This is what Saul does; we “must” do the same thing.

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

And the men which journeyed with him: It is not revealed who the men are who accompany Saul to Damascus. It has been suggested they are Jewish soldiers or a detachment of the temple guard or even chance travelers who also traveled the Damascus road.
stood speechless: As might be expected, would-be Bible critics claim a contradiction here. In Paul's recollection of the events in Acts 26:14, he says, "we were all fallen to the earth," yet here Luke says they "stood" speechless. Again, as always, the critics fall short. Dehoff explains the alleged contradiction:

The expression "stood speechless" has no reference to posture. One may stand in doubt, stand firm, stand in fear, stand speechless, or stand in awe while in any position of the body. These "stood speechless" while flat on the earth (230).

hearing a voice: In Paul's account in Acts 22:9 he says, "they heard not the voice of him that spake to me." Have we uncovered another contradiction? The answer is not at all. The Greek word (phone) translated here as "voice" may also be translated as "sound." (Vine, Vol. IV 55 190). This passage is not difficult to understand. Luke is saying the men with Saul hear a "sound" while Paul says they do not understand the "voice." The intention is to clarify what happened: the men hear a sound, but they do not understand what is said; it is only a noise to them. This exact phenomenon occurs in John 12:28-29. The people hear the "voice from heaven," yet they perceive only a noise as "it thundered." We often use the expression "I did not hear you" when we really mean, "I did not understand you."

but seeing no man: Luke makes it plain that those traveling with Saul do not see Jesus. For an Old Testament account similar to this one, see Daniel 10:4-7.
8 And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus.

The "mad mission of murder" has been aborted. The letters of destruction carried by Saul will not be delivered. This once passionate leader in persecution is now a pathetic blind man being led by his companions. Saul's rage is extinguished. He has submitted himself to the will of God, and now the passion will soon be rekindled in Saul's heart with the burning need to preach the very one he persecuted, Jesus Christ.

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

Saul's spirit is devastated. He is blind. He is lost. He has been fasting and praying (v.11) for three days, waiting for the messenger of God to bring the instructions telling him "what he must do."

The denominational commentators have a real problem with this verse. If Saul is saved on the Damascus road, as they teach, why is he not rejoicing as Samaria did (8:8) or as the Ethiopian eunuch did when he was saved (8:39)? The answer is obvious: Saul is not yet saved! He is not yet a Christian. He is still a sinner. The enormity of Saul's sins is still bearing down on him, so he has no reason to rejoice.
10 And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord.

And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias: Not much is known about Ananias, but we have enough evidence to draw some conclusions concerning the man. It is obvious he is a strong Christian who has been a resident of Damascus for some time. He speaks of the persecutions orchestrated by Saul as hearsay (v. 13), thus indicating that he was not one of those disciples dispersed from Jerusalem by the persecution (8:1). It is most likely Ananias is one of those visiting Jews converted on the day of Pentecost. It is a chilling thought; but, because of the prominence of Ananias in the Christian community in Damascus, he may very well have been one of the names on Saul's list for extermination!

and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord: Jesus speaks to Ananias (verses 10-17) in a vision and discovers him to be a rather reluctant but nonetheless obedient servant.

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

And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight: Jesus gives explicit instructions to Ananias: go to the street named Straight. McGarvey gives the following description of Straight street:
The street called Straight is still unmistakably identified in Damascus by its contrast with all the other streets of the city; for while all the others are crooked, making curves or abrupt angles at intervals of from fifty to one hundred yards, this runs nearly a mile with only five slight angles. The mention of this street by name, together with the name of Judas, in whose house Saul was staying, affords no mean evidence of the authenticity of this narrative (Vol. I 174).

and inquire in the house of Judas: This is all of the information that we have on the house of Judas. To further comment on who this man might have been would be pure conjecture.

for one called Saul, of Tarsus: Just to hear the name "Saul of Tarsus" produces fear in the heart of Ananias (see notes on 9:1).

for, behold, he prayeth: The venomous drive, once fueled by rage, has now left Saul; his now contrite spirit desires to speak to God.

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

And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in: Jesus explains to Ananais that Saul will be expecting him because Saul has already seen a vision portraying the event.

and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight: This information leaves no doubt that Ananias was one who had had the hands of the apostles laid upon him so he might be able to perform miracles. With this power, Ananais could restore Saul's sight (see notes on 6:6 and 8:17).
13 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: 14 And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.

Ananias explains that the reputation of Saul has preceded him. Ananias knows of the havoc caused by Saul in Jerusalem, and he also knows Saul is coming to Damascus to continue his relentless pursuit of Christians. The hesitancy of Ananias to face Saul is certainly understandable.

It is notable that Ananias uses the word "saints" in reference to Christians. This is the first time this term is used in the New Testament to indicate Christians; but because Ananias uses the word, it must have already acquired this general usage. Thayer defines a "saint" as one "set apart for God, to be, as it were exclusively his" (7-1-40).

The expression "all that call on thy name" refers to the faithful followers of Jesus. These followers, through their obedience to the gospel, have acknowledged the authority of Jesus in their lives. Bruce says, "... in practice it denotes Christians, as those who address Jesus as Lord" (199) (see notes on 2:21).

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

But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: The doubts and hesitations of Ananias are overridden by the command of Jesus. No excuse is acceptable when Christian duties call.
for he is a chosen vessel unto me: Saul is to serve a special purpose in the divine plan for spreading the Good News. Jesus chooses Saul to be this "chosen vessel" even before Saul chooses Jesus as his Lord. Vine says the word rendered "chosen" means, "... he is a vessel of choice unto Me. In the six other places where this word is found it is translated 'election'" (Vol. I 190).

In the figure of a "chosen vessel" to bear the name of Jesus..., he compares Saul to a carefully selected casket, in which a jewel rich enough for a present to a king is to be deposited, that jewel being his own precious name. Jewelers always keep costly gems in caskets of corresponding value; and so, when Jesus is about to send his name to kings and the great ones of earth, he chooses this persecuting Saul as the fittest vessel in which to enclose it. The selection was a most surprising one to Ananias; but subsequent events proved its wisdom. Long afterward Saul himself employed the same figure of speech, ... but he changes it materially, saying, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not of us" (II Cor. iv. 6,7). While to Christ he was a choice vessel, in his own eyes he was but a vessel of pottery (McGarvey, Vol. I 176).

to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: Saul is to be the moving force in the fulfillment of the words of the great prophet Isaiah. Saul is to become the bearer of this "new name" predicted by Isaiah (see notes on 11:26).

And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name (Isaiah 62:2).
Saul, in his own words, declares himself to be "the apostle of the Gentiles" (Romans 11:13; 1 Timothy 2:7; 2 Timothy 1:11). Saul preaches to kings: Agrippa in Acts 26:1 and perhaps to Caesar during his incarceration in Rome. Saul never forgets about his fellow Jews; he tries diligently to bring them to Jesus, although the majority, much to Saul's sorrow, reject the Savior (Romans 10:1-3).

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

Here is truly a grim prediction from the One who knows the future of Saul. Saul has caused others to suffer for being Christians; now he also, from this time forward, will be hated and harassed literally to his grave for the very cause that he once persecuted (see notes on Acts 20:23) (see also 2 Corinthians 11:23-28). It is truly amazing to consider the reversal in Saul's life, a life that begins in a fury against the very Cause that will finally provide him with "the peace ... which passeth all understanding" (Philippians 4:7).

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

Ananias discharges his duties as he has been directed by Jesus. The mission of Ananias is twofold: to restore Saul's sight and to assist in his being "filled with the Holy Ghost." Why does Ananias lay hands on him? We have a specific statement that tells us why. In a vision Saul sees "a man named Ananias coming in and laying his hands on him, that he might receive his sight" (9:12). Thus, we know that the laying on of the hands of Ananias is not to confer the Spirit but that Paul might receive his sight. Through the laying on of Ananias's hands, Saul is healed from his blindness; but we cannot assume that through the laying on of Ananias's
hands Saul receives the Holy Spirit. We have already learned in chapter eight when the converts in Samaria receive the miraculous "gift of the Holy Spirit" it is necessary to call the apostles from Jerusalem to impart this gift. It is only through the laying on of the apostles’ hands that the miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit may be given (8:18). Therefore, we must conclude that since Ananias is not an apostle, Saul does not receive the miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit by the laying on of the hands of Ananias. Saul receives the Holy Spirit in the only way he can with the help of Ananias: upon his obedience in baptism, administered by Anania, Saul receives the "gift of the Holy Spirit" as promised to "everyone" who will "repent and be baptized" (see notes on 2:38).

The statement of Ananias, that he had been sent that Saul might "be filled with the Holy Spirit," is commonly interpreted as implying that the Holy Spirit was to be imparted by imposition of hands. But we have seen already that when the Samaritan converts of Philip were to receive the miraculous gift of the Spirit, two apostles were sent to them for the purpose of imparting it, from which we inferred that Philip had not this power. This makes us slow to believe that the power was given to Ananias; yet we would be shut up to this conclusion if there were no alternative. There is, however, an alternative which makes this conclusion not only unnecessary, but highly improbable. We have learned, from Peter’s first discourse, that all who repented and were baptized received the Holy Spirit; and it follows that Saul received the Spirit when Ananias baptized him. This made his reception of the Holy Spirit dependent on the coming of Ananias, and it sufficiently accounts for the words of the latter without resorting to the improbable supposition that he was empowered to do that which none but apostles could ordinarily do (McGarvey, Vol. I 178).
We must not forget that Saul also needs the miraculous abilities afforded by the Holy Spirit in order to perform the duties of an apostle. This miraculous gift is given to the original apostles on the day of Pentecost (see notes on 2:1-4). It is the understanding of this writer that Saul receives this miraculous ability during his sojourn in Arabia (see notes on 9:23.)

Much discussion is made over the fact that Ananias calls Saul "brother." This discussion is caused from a misunderstanding as to when Saul is converted. The reference to Saul as "brother" cannot indicate Saul is already a brother in Christ because Saul is not yet "in Christ." To be "in Christ," one must be baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:27). Saul is not a "brother" in Christ because he is still an alien sinner; he must be baptized to "wash away" his sins (22:16). Ananias, by calling Saul “brother,” is simply recognizing him as a fellow member of the Jewish family.

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

With the laying on of Ananias' hands, the blindness Saul has experienced falls from his eyes like "scales." He is now physically made whole. His spiritual healing is soon to follow.

Luke says, he "arose, and was baptized." Baptized? Why in the world would a man who has had all of these religious experiences need to be baptized? Here is a man who has:

1. Seen a light from heaven.
2. Heard the voice of Jesus.
4. Repented and confessed Jesus as Lord.
5. Fasted for three days.
6. Prayed for three days.
7. Had hands laid upon him.

Yet he needs to be baptized because none of the above have accomplished the forgiveness of Saul's sins! In Saul's own account of these events, he records the instructions of Ananias thusly: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins ..." (22:16).

Although Jesus has spoken to Saul, it should be noted that the conversion of Saul is accomplished by a human messenger. This is similar to the case of the eunuch in chapter eight; but instead of sending an angel to speak to the preacher, Jesus Himself speaks to Ananias. The conclusion, on both occasions, is that the gospel must be preached by a man to achieve the salvation of a sinner (Mark 16:15-16; Romans 1:16).

Also when Saul was baptized he received the indwelling gift of the Holy Spirit (2:38). "The significance of two clauses here is vital. This verse does not say that Saul received his sight and received the Holy Spirit, but that he received his sight and arose and was baptized, indicating that the gift of the Holy Spirit followed his baptism (Coffman 187).

The mission of Ananias is completed. Saul is now ready to begin his monumental work in service to Jesus, his newly recognized Lord.
19 And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.

When Saul is converted and receives the forgiveness for his sins, his time of grief and fasting comes to an end. He is refreshed spiritually; now it is time to refresh himself physically.

Luke uses the term, "certain days," to indicate a short period of time (10:48; 16:12; 24:24; 25:13). This new fellowship of which Saul is now a part must have been strange indeed in the beginning. Here we have the once persecuted and the one time persecutor brought together as brothers in Christ. The conversion of Saul, a milestone in Christianity, is now complete. This man of talent, education, and burning zeal, this "Hebrew of Hebrews" will spend the rest of his life with but one focus: THE PREACHING OF JESUS THE SON OF GOD.

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

The word "straightway" literally means, "at once or soon" Strong 33). At once, whether this was one day or six days, Saul begins to preach Jesus in the synagogues. The same Jesus who used to infuriate Saul, at the very mention of His name, is now the central theme of his preaching.
21 But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?

The amazing transformation in the man Saul is noted by all. They have not forgotten his reputation in Jerusalem where he "made havoc of them" who believed in Jesus, nor have they forgotten the murderous motive for Saul's trip to Damascus. But now, much to the consternation of the Jews, Saul has aligned himself with the very ones to whom he originally came to lay waste.

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

Saul's convictions in the truth rapidly increase along with his efforts to prove Jesus. All of this change happens so suddenly that the Jews are "confounded" (stirred up). They expected a champion from Jerusalem who would marshal their forces against those of "the way." Instead, their champion is not theirs at all but rather has turned out to be a leader of the opposition. Saul is proving that Jesus is the Son of God, the Messiah. Boles says, "Proving is from the Greek word (sunbibazon), and means that Saul put things side by side, and so making a comparison and forming a conclusion that Jesus was the Christ" (149).
23 And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him:

It is at this point that we need to consider the sojourn of Saul in Arabia. The words, "after that many days were fulfilled" seem to be the only reference that Luke gives to this event. In order to establish some reasonable chronology of these events in Saul’s conversion and earliest efforts to preach the gospel, we want to include Saul's own account as given in Galatians 1:15-18. The following seems to meet the scriptural requirements for these events:

1. Saul begins his journey to Damascus (9:1-3).
2. Jesus appears to Saul in the road (9:3-5).
3. Saul spends three days in fasting and prayer (9:9).
4. Ananias comes to Saul, his sight is restored, and he is baptized and receives the gift of the Holy Spirit (9:17-18).
5. Straightway Saul preaches Christ in the synagogues (9:20).
6. The Jews are stirred up by the preaching of Saul (9:22).
7. Saul departs Damascus and goes into Arabia for "many days" (an indefinite part of three years)(9:23; Galatians 1:17-18).
8. After "many days were fulfilled," Saul returns to Damascus (9:23; Galatians 1:17-18).
10. It has now been about three years since Saul was converted. He escapes from Damascus and travels to Jerusalem where he stays with Peter for fifteen days (9:25-26; Galatians 1:18).

Arabia may be generally described as the region to the east and south of Damascus, although the boundaries changed according to the nationalistic zeal of the king of Syria or the tribes of Arabia. Dr. J. S. Howson makes the following comment:
For though the strong powers of Syria and Mesopotamia might check the Arabian tribes, and retrench the Arabian name in this direction, yet the Gardens of Damascus were on the verge of the desert, and Damascus was almost as much an Arabian as a Syrian town (Conybeare and Howson 90).

Saul does not have far to go to be in Arabia. There is much conjecture as to his excursion into the region of Arabia. Exactly how long Saul stays in Arabia, we have no sure way of knowing. It is a portion of three years. Some commentators would have us believe Saul spends several years in the desert of Arabia in meditation. Knowing the restless character of Saul, this is highly unlikely. It is more probable that Saul spends no more time in Arabia than it takes to equip him with the necessities for his new mission in life, that being an apostle of Jesus Christ.

The reason for Saul's trip also leaves us with questions. Is it for the purpose of preaching or to prepare himself to meet the necessary requirements to be an apostle? Perhaps it is some of both; but Saul seems to tell us that the latter is the main purpose of his trip (Galatians 1:16-17). He explains that the knowledge and revelations given to him were not from men (Galatians 1:11). In Saul's words he states he "did not go up to Jerusalem to the apostles" (Galatians 1:17); rather he receives everything that he needs from God; he "conferred not with flesh and blood" (Galatians 1:16).

It is the opinion of this writer that Saul receives the baptism of the Holy Spirit while in Arabia. The original apostles received the baptism of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (2:1-4); but Saul, being "one born out of due time," has to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit with its accompanying miraculous power at some later time. It is very likely that it is in Arabia that God gives Saul everything he needs to be a full-fledged apostle.
After this period of "many days," a part of which are spent in Arabia and the rest in preaching in and about Damascus, the Jews, being no longer able to meet him in controversy, resort to that which is the last argument of a desperate cause: they resolve to assassinate him. This is the first of many murderous plots against Saul. Some of these same Jews will pursue Saul to his grave!

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

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

Like the spies from the house of Rahab (Joshua 2:15) and David from his own house (1 Samuel 19:12), Saul escapes over the walls of Damascus in a basket. In Saul's account in 2 Corinthians 11:32-33, he states it is the governor under King Aretas who leads the effort to capture him.

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

By the best estimates, Saul has been gone from Jerusalem for slightly more than three years. His return puts him in a difficult position. His old associates know full well of his defection, so he can expect no friendly reception from them. On the other hand, we are not surprised at the cold and suspicious reception given him by the Christian community. They remember him best as the persecutor who invaded the ranks of Christians bringing terror, pain, and death. It is with this suspicious and skeptical body of disciples that Saul "assayed," that is he tried or attempted, to "join himself."
27 But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

**But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles:** Saul needs a friend, someone to plead his case. That friend appears in the form of Barnabas, the "son of consolation" (4:36). What causes Barnabas to step up in defense of Saul? E. H. Plumptre speculates that "... the Levite of Cyprus and the tent-maker had been friends in earlier years. The culture of which Tarsus was a seat, would naturally attract a student from the neighbouring island..." (63). It very well could have been the case that Saul and Barnabas are old school friends. But it is much easier to see the friendly actions of Barnabas as resulting from his kindly disposition.

All that is revealed of Barnabas in the New Testament justifies the affirmation that he is a good man full of wisdom and the Holy Spirit. In his espousal of Paul's sincerity in this episode, there is an illustration of the truth that it is better to trust than to distrust; it is better to believe the best of men than it is to believe the worst of them (Coffman 190).

This gentleman from Cyprus will be heard from many times in this chronicle of the spread of the gospel (4:36).

**and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus:** Barnabas uses the following evidence in defense of Saul:

1. Saul is an eyewitness to the risen Jesus. It is necessary for Saul, like the other apostles, to be a witness of the resurrection of Jesus.
2. Jesus speaks to Saul on the Damascus road, further affirmation that Saul is a "chosen vessel" of the Lord.

3. Saul confirms and declares his faith in Jesus by "boldly" preaching Him before the Jews.

The defense, made by Barnabas, seems to have been sufficient to convince Peter and James, along with the other disciples, that Saul is truly a convert to Christianity.

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

Saul remains a constant companion of Peter and James for a period of fifteen days (Galatians 1:18-19). During this time he is involved on a daily basis with the work of preaching the gospel in Jerusalem.

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

The sheer bravery of Saul is seen in his dauntless courage to preach the gospel to these bitter enemies of the cross. Saul picks up the sword of the fallen Stephen and wields it with telling effect against his own former friends and allies. But these implacable foes of Christianity have no more patience with Saul than they had with Stephen. "They went about to slay him." Such is to become the legacy of Saul. Twice within two weeks, first at Damascus and now at Jerusalem, Saul literally runs for his life.
30 Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus.

**Which when the brethren knew:** When the brethren learn of the plot to kill Saul, they demonstrate that Saul has been accepted into their fellowship by their concern for his safety. They assist him in escaping the danger.

**they brought him down to Caesarea:** The disciples assist Saul in escaping to the city of Caesarea. Coffman makes a most informative statement about Caesarea:

> This magnificent city was built by Herod the Great on the site of Strato's Tower, and was located on the Mediterranean shore, some 23 miles south of Mt. Carmel and 65 miles northwest of Jerusalem. Lodlow pointed out that Palestine had no adequate seaport till this city was built. God's purpose of containment for the chosen people in Palestine was served by the fact that no seaport existed during the greater part of Israel's history. But when, in the fullness of time, God had at last brought into the world his glorious Son, and at a time following the conquest of the whole world by Alexander, and the establishment of a single language, known and understood all over the world; after those events, and after the Christ had suffered on Calvary and the gospel was ready to be preached to all men, God had but lately made ready the marvelous harbor of Caesarea as a portal by which the word would travel to the ends of the earth (191).

This important seaport city has an influence on many New Testament events. Caesarea is the home of Cornelius (10:1). It is here that Philip the evangelist makes his home (21:8). Next to Jerusalem, Caesarea is perhaps the most important city in the New Testament.
and sent him forth to Tarsus: In his flight from Jerusalem, Saul returns home to Tarsus (see notes on 9:1). One can only guess at the reception Saul receives from his family and old friends. Things have certainly changed for him. He returns home a fugitive from two great cities and a deserter from the "strictest of the Jewish sects" in which he was educated, but he brings "glad tidings of great joy." There are those who speculate Saul is disinherited by his family when they learn that he has become a Christian. Later, in Saul's own words he says, "... I have suffered the loss of all things" (Philippians 3:8). Whether it is true or not that Saul's family disowns him, evidently Saul has a sister whose son is his friend (see 23:16.)

The expense of Christianity is becoming abundantly clear to Saul. He has already experienced "perils by his own countrymen, and perils in the city." The apostle has been "in journeyings often, in weariness and painfulness." He is beginning to realize "how great things he was to suffer" for the name of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 11:26-27; Acts 9:16).

It is at this point that Saul temporarily leaves the pages of Luke's narrative. We will next encounter this great apostle in the city of Antioch (11:25-26). Saul has established himself as a bona fide apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, having received his commission, not from men, but from God (Galatians 1:11-12).

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

Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria: As Luke is prone to do, he hesitates between major events to chronicle the growth of the church (see notes on 6:7). The churches are enjoying a temporary respite in persecution; they are at "rest." This persecution, which begins shortly after the stoning of Stephen (8:1), has most likely burned itself out during the three-year absence of the chief ringleader in havoc, Saul. With the
return of Saul, whom the Jews now count as a traitor, the peace is momentarily disturbed and the Jews are upset again. Peace is again restored when Saul departs from Jerusalem. It is for certain Saul's defection from Judaism will never be forgotten by the Jewish community. Their bitterness will fester and canker until it has the opportunity to break out again.

**and were edified:** The church is being built up and is growing on a daily basis. "The term 'edified' comes from the Greek word *oikodoumene*, and means 'to build up a house;' this term or figure is used frequently by Paul and Peter" (Reese 298).

**and walking in the fear of the Lord:** The term "walking" is often used to indicate Christian conduct or manner of life. These Christians are living a life of respect and adoration for God, the type of life that will eventually bring them to the sought-after eternal abode in heaven (Luke 1:6; Colossians 1:10; 1 John 2:6).

**and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost:** This body of believers is enjoying the benefits of "walking in the Lord" and the encouragement and consolation given by God's word as delivered by the Holy Spirit. Luke reveals the source of power for the church. "When the members walk with the fear of the Lord before their eyes and with The Spirit's encouraging voice in their hearts, the church will be strong and will also surely multiply "(Lenski 381).

"These early disciples are enjoying the benefits of living ('walking') in the exhortation of the Holy Spirit. The Greek word rendered 'comfort' (*paraklesis*) means a calling to one's side..." (Vine, Vol. I 207). This "calling to one's side" can be either for consolation or for exhortation and the word is rendered both ways in the New Testament (compare 13:15; Romans 12:8 with 15:31; Romans 15:5). "Here exhortation is the rendering approved by the best authorities, to be construed with 'was multiplied': was multiplied by the exhortations of the Holy Ghost;' i.e., by the Holy Spirit inspiring the preachers, and moving the hearts of the hearers" (Vincent 495).
were multiplied: As noted above, the Lord’s church will always grow in every way when its members walk in the fear of God and the exhortations of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:6).

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

And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters: It seems to be the purpose of Luke to show how the apostles continue to preach the gospel throughout the regions of Palestine. Peter is here mentioned as passing “throughout all quarters” (all parts).

he came down also to the saints: As has been previously noted, "saints" are Christians (9:13). How there came to be Christians in Lydda is a matter of speculation. Perhaps they became Christians because of the efforts of Philip (8:40) or they were dispersed from Jerusalem to avoid the persecutions (8:1-4).

which dwelt at Lydda: The town of Lydda is situated twenty miles northwest from Jerusalem, which amounted to about one day’s journey. It is ten or twelve miles southeast of Joppa. Lydda is the same as Lod in the Old Testament (1 Chronicles 8:12; Ezra 2:33).

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

And there he found a certain man named Aeneas: The name "Aeneas" indicates the man is a Greek.
which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy: In the exactness of this statement, Luke lets his professionalism as a physician show through. This man has been bedfast for eight years with palsy.

Luke being a physician tells us the specific disease with which he was afflicted; he was “palsied”, “palsy” is a contraction of the word “paralysis.” The term is used by the ancient physicians in a much wider sense than by our modern men of science; it included not only what we call paralysis, but also catalepsy and tetanus; that is, cramps and lockjaw (Boles 155).

The fact that Aeneas has been in this distress for eight years makes this miracle even more famous. Surely after eight years there can be no doubt as to the severity of his ailment, and also many people know of his circumstances. When the apostles heal someone, it is not one of these ambiguous, power of suggestion stunts that requires a testimony to let us know what happens, as used by modern "faith healers." To the contrary, to these men of God, the more obvious the ailment the better it is to demonstrate the power of God.

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

And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed: Peter demonstrates the power to heal is not by his own authority, but rather the power is in Jesus Christ (3:6).
And he arose immediately: The instantaneous nature of this healing should be noticed. Here is a man who has "kept his bed eight years"; yet in the time it takes for Peter to say the words, he is healed. Jesus has certainly kept his promise that he would confirm the preaching of the apostles with mighty signs and wonders (Mark 16:17). The impact of this miracle is soon to be felt in the regions round about.

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

The majority of the population of Lydda and the surrounding plain of Sharon turn in mass to the Lord as a result of this miracle. To "turn to the Lord" means these people hear the gospel, repent of their sins, confess Jesus as the Son of God, and are baptized in water for the remission of their sins. Then, their being "such as should be saved," the Lord adds them to His church. (For additional commentary on "turned," see notes on 3:19.) These people were truly ripe for the gospel. McGarvey says concerning these people, "like ripe fruit on a tree, which needs only a little shaking to bring it down, were already most favorably inclined to the truth" (Vol. I 193).

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

Now there was at Joppa: Joppa is one of several of the cities on the plains of Sharon on the Mediterranean Sea coast. Joppa served for many years as the principal seaport to Judea. Joppa is the modern city of Jaffa, which still serves as a seaport to Israel. The city lies northwest of Jerusalem a distance of about thirty-eight miles. Joppa is a noteworthy city in Bible history. "It is the port at which the rafts of cedar from Lebanon for Solomon's temple were landed (II Chron. ii.16); and also those for the second temple (Ezra iii.7); and it is the one from which Jonah set sail, that he might flee to Tarshish (Jonah i.3)" (McGarvey, Vol. I 194).
a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: Luke explains the name Tabitha when translated into the Greek is the name Dorcas. Her name in English would be translated “gazelle.” This animal is known for its grace and beauty.

this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did: Dorcas is only the second woman mentioned by name since Pentecost, and what a contrast she is to the first woman mentioned. Sapphira is the first woman named, and it could be said of her that she was full of lies and deceit while Dorcas is "full of good works." To be "full of good works" is a wonderful epitaph for any Christian!

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

This is the first record that we have of a Christian’s dying a natural death. The passing of this one, who is so highly esteemed by the Christian community, is given a special place on the pages of God's history. The body of the beloved Dorcas, washed and prepared for burial, is laid out in the upper room as is the custom of the Jews.

38 And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them.

It is twelve miles from Joppa to Lydda, a sad trip of about three hours for the two men sent to bear the message of the death of Dorcas to Peter. It is not clear as to what the disciples expect Peter to do. The urgency of their desire for Peter to come is made known in their message for him to come without delay. It is obviously too late to call a physician, but perhaps these faithful
brethren trust in Peter to invoke the mercies of the "Great Physician" on behalf of their dear departed sister.

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

Peter finds a pitiful little scene when he arrives at the resting place of Dorcas. All of the widows are standing about with big tears streaming down their faces, weeping over the loss of their friend and benefactor. Each is showing the clothing the nimble fingers of the good sister Dorcas made for them, clothing they probably would not have had were it not for Dorcas. What a wonderful memorial to this great woman! It seems to be the nature of mankind to want to leave a mark on this earth after one is gone. Some would leave monuments of metal or stone, others inscriptions declaring their accomplishments in glowing tones how much more could one ask than to be remembered by both God and man for good deeds done? Such is the legacy of Dorcas.

Here is a great lesson for any Christian. Dorcas uses the talents she has to accomplish a great work. What she did is not showy and most likely did not draw a lot of attention from the society of her day. To give this event a modern twist and perhaps put it more in our perspective, the death of Dorcas probably did not make the headlines of the Joppa Gazzette or the six o'clock news, but through her good deeds the name of Dorcas is immortalized. Her name will be read and appreciated in God's word literally forever! Even the world in general understands the good connotation of the name Dorcas. There are societies that sew to make clothing for the poor. These societies are called "Dorcas Societies."
40 But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up.

What a scene this would have been to witness! Peter clears the room; and then, perhaps remembering the time when Jesus raised the daughter of Jairus, he prays the prayer of faith that ends with the same confident command used by Jesus; Peter says, "Tabitha, arise" (Mark 5:40-42). Without hesitation this good servant of the Lord breathes again the breath of mortal life. She "opened her eyes" and "sat up" in response to Peter's command.

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

Peter extends his hand to assist Dorcas to stand. He calls to the grieving disciples and presents to them Tabitha, alive!

"Here the narration closes, as well it might; for not even Luke's graphic pen could describe the scene that followed. And if the restoration of one saint to the little band which she has left is indescribable, what shall we say or think of that hour when all the sainted dead shall rise in glory and greet one another on the shores of life (McGarvey, Vol. I 197)?

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

Jesus continues to confirm the preaching of the gospel with "signs following." This is the first example that we have of the apostles’ raising the dead. The news of this notable miracle is spread throughout Joppa with the desired results, "many believed in the Lord."
43 And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.

Joppa is now a field white unto harvest; thus, Peter tarries to reap the harvest of souls for the Lord. Just how long Peter remains in Joppa is unknown. Some believe this "many days" may have been as long as three years (9:23).

The fact that Peter takes his abode with Simon the tanner may appear to be insignificant on the surface; yet on closer study it reveals a valuable point. The Jews consider the job of a tanner as an abomination because the work involves handling the carcasses of unclean animals. Perhaps this situation shows that an ordinarily very "kosher" Peter is gradually getting away from his Jewish prejudices and is being made ready for the events that will transpire in chapter ten. Living with one who earns his living by handling dead animals is a radical step for a rigid observer of the laws of purity.

The stage is now set and the participants are now ready for the bringing in of the Gentiles into Christianity. Little does Peter know that living with a tanner is a mild experience compared to what he would be called upon to do next!
The following chapter chronicles the beginning of the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles. Until this point in New Testament history, the gospel has been restricted to the Jews only. Beginning here, the gospel is to both Jews and Gentiles. In the dramatic series of events that are about to unfold, God guides both the preacher and the subject of conversion with supernatural instructions. It is here that the second part of New Testament history begins: the conversion of the Gentiles to Jesus Christ.

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek (Romans 1:16).

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

There was a certain man in Caesarea: For a description of the city of Caesarea, see notes on Acts 9:30.

called Cornelius: Cornelius is a name of Latin origin, indicating this man is most likely a Roman. Bruce notes, "Cornelius was a specially common name in Rome ever since Publius Cornelius Sulla in 82 B.C. liberated 10,000 slaves ... " (214).
a centurion of the band called the Italian band: A "band" is a regiment of from six hundred to one thousand Roman soldiers. A "centurion," as the name suggests, is a commander over a division of soldiers consisting of one hundred men. Cornelius is the commander over one hundred Roman soldiers from Italy. This elite Roman division is referred to as the "Italian band," thus distinguishing it from other "bands" that were composed of soldiers from the provinces.

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

A devout man, and one that feared God: It is truly amazing to realize that this soldier who has risen to the rank of centurion in the Roman army, a Gentile to whom neither the Law nor the Gospel has been extended, is nonetheless a reverent, God-fearing man. Evidently Cornelius has come under the influence of the religion of the Jews and might be considered a proselyte of the gate. That is, he is not a full proselyte, rather a Gentile who keeps the ceremonial laws but is uncircumcised.

A proselyte was a Gentile who undertook to keep the Jewish law in its entirety and was admitted into full fellowship with the people of Israel by a threefold rite: (1) circumcision (for male proselytes), and (2) a purificatory self-baptism in the presence of witnesses, and (3) the offering of a sacrifice. Because of the first of these three requirements, full proselytization was more common among women than men. Many men were content with that looser attachment to the Jewish religion usually indicated by the term "God-fearers" (Bruce 64).
Cornelius is one of these "God-fearers." The very people whom he is helping to keep in subjection to Rome teaches Cornelius the only true God. Since the gospel has not been available to the Gentiles until now and since Cornelius is living the Jewish law to the best of his ability, he stands righteous before God. Cornelius is a Gentile who shows "the work of the law written in his heart" (Romans 2:14-15). Cornelius is a "just" man (verse 22). It is the will of God that such a man as this pious Gentile will be first to receive the "keys of the kingdom" for all Gentiles.

**with all his house:** Cornelius is concerned that his family and servants may also share his religious convictions. He seeks to impart his beliefs upon those of "his house." This is a noble example for all Christians.

**which gave much alms to the people:** This is yet another example of the good nature of Cornelius. He is generous with his wealth, giving "much alms" to the people.

**and prayed to God alway:** Cornelius is a praying man. We can assume that what is about to happen is the answer to Cornelius's prayer. Not only does Cornelius pray, but God hears his prayer (verse 31). This is further evidence that until now Cornelius has been righteous in the sight of God because as the blind man says:

> Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. (John 9:31)

Cornelius is soon to learn that Jesus Christ has come between all men and God. If he expects to continue his relationship with God, he will have to do so through Jesus.
3 He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius.

**He saw in a vision:** The first step in bringing this good man to Christ and opening the door to Christianity for all Gentiles begins with a "vision." We are not to understand that Cornelius is in a trance or having a dream. Cornelius is wide-awake and engaging in prayer (verse 30). This supernatural event involves the actual appearance of a heavenly messenger. There is to be no doubt about this experience: an "angel of God" appears and speaks to Cornelius.

**evidently about the ninth hour of the day:** The "ninth hour" as the Jews kept time is about three o'clock in the afternoon. This is one of the times for the traditional Jewish hours of prayer (see notes on 3:1.)

**an angel of God coming in to him:** One of God's heavenly messengers is dispatched with divine instructions that will bring a gospel preacher to the house of Cornelius. For more information on angels, see notes on 5:19 and 7:30.

**and saying unto him, Cornelius:** It is noteworthy that the angel calls Cornelius by name. It is an humbling thought to know that in spite of the multitudes of human beings on the earth, God and His heavenly representatives are aware of us as individuals even to the degree of knowing us by name.

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

**And when he looked on him, he was afraid:** Who would not be startled to have one of God's holy angels appear and speak to him?
That one should have an angel speak to him is beyond all natural phenomena: Nor should this fact be lost on believers. The Christian religion is a supernatural religion; and, if the supernatural elements in it can be denied, the entire system is not merely worthless, but detestable (Coffman 200).

and said, What is it, Lord: The word "Lord" is used here simply as a term of respect. It could have been translated "sir" (see notes on 9:5.)

And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God: What a wonderful thought! Man, who is always looking for a way to build himself a memorial, may be overlooking the greatest memorial possible. God recognizes as a memorial the prayerful life of a good man who is full of good deeds and a desire to know and serve Him.

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

The angel brings these divine instructions to Cornelius: "send to Joppa for Simon Peter" (for more information on Joppa, see notes on 9:36).

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

He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: The angel's instructions to Cornelius are plain and explicit. The servants of Cornelius will have no trouble in locating Peter, who has been living at the house of Simon, the tanner, evidently since the raising of Dorcas from the dead. See notes on Acts 9:43 for comments on the relationship of the Apostle Peter with Simon the tanner.
he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do. What is the purpose in calling Peter? Why did not the angel tell Cornelius what he needed to do? The answer is Jesus committed the task of preaching the gospel to man. An angel sent Philip to the Ethiopian (8:26), but it is the man Philip who tells him what he needs to do to be saved (8:35). Jesus appears to Saul in person (9:5), but it is the man Ananias who preaches the gospel of salvation to Saul (9:17). A divine pattern is established; it will not be altered here. These facts need to be impressed upon the minds of all-- supernatural interventions never supersede the indispensable work of the human agent. The angel appears to Cornelius, but it will be the man Peter who will tell him "words whereby he shall be saved" (11:14).

From the Bible record of Cornelius, we learn:

1) Morals alone will not save one from his sins.
2) Praying on a regular basis will not save.
3) Doing good deeds does not save one from his sins.
4) Having an angel appear unto a person will not save.
5) Even a combination of all the above will not save.

To be saved, one must hear and obey "the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16).

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

Although it is late in the afternoon, the zeal of this good Gentile is not to be delayed. Cornelius quickly begins the process that will bring the Apostle Peter to him by dispatching two faithful servants and a "devout" soldier to "call for" Peter.
8 And when he had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa.

As soon as these servants receive their instructions, they are on their way to Joppa. The promptness of these men can be appreciated as this trip involves a journey of about thirty miles. They leave Caesarea sometime after three o’clock (ninth hour) in the afternoon and arrive in Joppa about noon (sixth hour) of the next day (verses 3 and 9).

The scene now shifts from Caesarea back to Joppa where Peter is about to be prepared for what he would never have dreamed possible. God is about to use him to open the "kingdom of heaven" to the Gentiles. It is likely Peter does not fully understand nor appreciate the promise that Jesus makes to him in Matthew when He tells him he will be given the "keys of the kingdom."

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (Matthew 16:18,19)

The "keys of the kingdom" is the gospel of Christ. It is Peter who preaches the first gospel sermon to the Jews on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), and now it is Peter who has the great privilege of preaching the gospel first to the Gentiles.
9 On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour:

The necessary elements for this extraordinary event are coming together. The messengers from Cornelius are nearing the city of Joppa as Peter retires to the rooftop to pray.

In the eastern countries the houses often have flat roofs. It is customary that the roof be used as a place for relaxation as we might use a patio or porch. It is here Peter goes to pray "about the sixth hour," noon by Jewish time keeping.

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

And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready: Peter is “very hungry” but even this strong physical need will wait while the will of God is working.

From the connection, where is said that they were making ready, that is, preparing a meal, it would seem that this was the customary hour of dining. The Hebrews, Greeks, and Romans, however, had but two meals, and the first was usually taken about ten or eleven o'clock. This meal usually consisted of fruit, milk, cheese, etc. Their principal meal was about six or seven in the afternoon, at which time they observed their feasts (Barnes 444- 445).

Now it can be understood why Peter is "very hungry" since the usual morning meal is at least an hour late.
he fell into a trance: The Greek says that an ecstasy (*ekstasis*) fell upon Peter. Vine defines *ekstasis* thusly: "a condition in which ordinary consciousness and the perception of natural circumstances were withheld, and the soul was susceptible only to the vision imparted by God" (Vol. IV 148).

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

Peter, who is now caught up in this revelation from heaven, sees as it were a sheet let down from heaven by its four corners.

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

*Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth:* We quickly learn that this "vessel" from heaven contains various sorts of animals. The Jews make a distinction between clean and unclean animals. In Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14, rules are given concerning which animals are considered as clean and which are unclean. For example, among the four-footed beasts, which includes such animals as sheep, goats, camels, cattle, swine, donkeys, etc., the only ones considered to be clean and could be eaten are those that have a cloven (divided) hoof and chewed their cud. Using this guide line, the Jews could eat cattle and sheep; but camels, which chew their cud, are considered unclean because their hooves are not divided. Even though they have cloven hooves, Hogs are considered unclean because they do not chew their cud.
and wild beasts: "Wild beasts" are generally to be understood as carnivorous animals. These are the ferocious animals of the region as lions, bears, etc.; they are considered as unclean because they eat blood and carrion and are therefore inedible to the Jews.

And creeping things: These “creeping things” are such creatures as snakes, lizards, insects, etc., Of these, a few, such as the locust (grasshopper), are counted as clean (edible) while the majority of "creeping things" are unclean.

and fowls of the air: Certain birds are allowed to be eaten while others such as owls and eagles are considered an abomination.

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

The command from heaven is for Peter to "rise and kill and eat" without distinction as to the animal's being clean or unclean. The true indication of this command is that the Old Testament commandments concerning the restrictions among animals has been removed. These steps are gradually preparing Peter for the acceptance of the Gentiles.

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

We never have to wonder what Peter is thinking! The very idea of eating one of these "unclean" animals is repulsive to Peter. He even carries it a step farther in saying he has not eaten anything "common." "Common" is a term used to indicate those things indulged in by the Gentiles.
In spite of the teaching Peter has just received from the Lord--that the commandments of Moses pertaining to diet are not binding on Christians--he still resists the command of God (Mark 7:15-19). Peter has a difficult time realizing that at this very moment he is being taught some of the fundamental principles of the Christian dispensation. Either Peter does not understand, or else he does not remember his statement in his sermon on the day of Pentecost when he affirmed the promises of the gospel are "to all that are afar off," thus signifying the acceptance of the Gentiles by God (2:39).

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

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

This scene, as observed by Peter, is repeated three times. The obvious reason for the repetition is for emphasis. This repetitious teaching should have sounded a familiar note to Peter because he has already experienced this tactic. Jesus, shortly after His resurrection, asks Peter three times, "lovest thou me?" (John 21:15-17).

The voice from heaven surely puts the Apostle Peter to thinking. If God commands you to do a thing, it is not impure or wrong. "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common." Today in our world, with its awareness of microbes, germs, etc., there are those who are afraid to obey God in the way that He instituted the Lord's supper because they count the practice of using one cup as unsanitary, "unclean" (Matthew 26:27). Woe unto those who would call that which God has appointed as common or unclean!"
17 Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate,

Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean: One would have to appreciate the fact that Peter is very slow to accept a teaching that is a radical departure from what he has always believed. (We get the idea that Peter understands this vision; but, because of his prejudice, he begins to look for possible meanings other than the most obvious.) Perhaps Peter is thinking if the distinction between clean and unclean meats has been abolished, what else has been changed? In Peter's wildest dreams, he would not have imagined that God is about to use him in His plan to open the kingdom of heaven to these "uncircumcised Gentiles."

behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate:

The fact that this group of Gentiles is at the gate asking to see Peter is no coincidence. The providence of God is at work; and, just as surely as Philip providentially intercepted the Ethiopian eunuch on the road to Gaza in order to preach "unto him Jesus" (8:26-39), so also will the providence of God bring Peter to preach the "good news" to the Gentiles.
18 And called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there.

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

This delegation from Cornelius knows exactly where to ask and for whom. Cornelius has received these divine instructions directly from the messenger of God (10:5-7). Peter is still rehearsing the events that have transpired when the Holy Spirit informs him there are three men who desire to see him. It is very probable that Peter would have had nothing to do with these Gentiles if he had not received reassurance from the Holy Spirit.

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

The Holy Spirit gives definite instructions to Peter; he can enter into this event with the full confidence that it has God's approval. "I have sent them," assures the Spirit.

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

Because of the revelation that Peter has received and the direct command of the Holy Spirit, he has no choice of action but to go down and receive these men.
And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee.

The good qualities of Cornelius are recounted by these messengers (see notes on verses 1 and 2). Surely the implications of what has transpired are becoming more clear to Peter.

Connecting this message sent by the order of a "holy angel" with the vision and with the command of the Spirit to go with these men, nothing doubting, Peter now in an instant sees he is called by divine authority, through the angel, through the vision, through the Spirit, to do what he has always before thought sinful, to go into the house of a Gentile, and to speak to him the word of the Lord. Nothing less than an unmistakable divine call could have induced him to go; but now he has no alternative unless he would withstand God. He now sees what he afterward expresses so happily: that he was to call no man common or unclean (McGarvey, Vol. I 205).

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

Then called he them in, and lodged them. And on the morrow Peter went away with them: Since it is too late in the day to begin a journey to Caesarea, Peter invites these men into the house to spend the night. Peter, who yesterday would have crossed the street to keep from walking on the same side as these despised Gentiles, today is ready to accept them into his fellowship. Jesus came into the world to remove the enmity from between men. To reconcile both Jew and Gentile in one body by his death upon the cross (Ephesians 2:16-22).
This was Peter's first break with the exclusiveness of the law of Moses. The Gentiles he invited into the house, shared the meal which by that time had been prepared for him, and kept them overnight, the lateness of the hour requiring that they should wait till the morrow to start to Caesarea. By this one act, Peter swept aside the prejudices of a lifetime, letting in the fresh air of the kingdom of heaven (Coffman 207).

and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him: In his many experiences with his Jewish brethren, Peter has the forethought to take some men with him to witness what is about to happen. We learn from Acts 11:12 that he takes with him six brethren to be competent witnesses that every word, every action can be verified. Peter, no doubt, anticipates having to give an explanation as to his association with these Gentiles. This is a wise decision on Peter's part as we soon discover when he is called to explain his actions.

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

In high anticipation, this noble Centurion has gathered his family and friends together to hear the words of Peter. He has no doubt that the bread of life is soon to be broken unto him. That the tribe of Cornelius would be increased upon the face of the earth today is our prayer.
25 And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him.

Since we understand Cornelius is not an idolater, we have no reason to believe that when he "worshipped" Peter he was giving Peter the status of a god or any divine honor. "Cornelius worshiped Peter only in the sense of paying him that homage which, according to oriental custom, was due to one of greatly superior rank" (McGarvey, Vol. I 207). Vincent in his comments on "worshipped" says, "An unfortunate translation, according to modern English usage, but justified by the usage of earlier English, according to which to worship meant simply to honor. Worship is worthship, or honor paid to dignity or worth" (500-501).

What a scene comes to our imagination! Here is a commander of one hundred elite Roman soldiers, a member of the army that has conquered the world, bowing before a fisherman from Galilee! After all, this Galilean fisherman holds the "keys to the kingdom," and this humble Roman waits with high expectation that his prayers are about to be answered. He, too, will soon be "such as should be saved."

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

It may have been that Peter does not understand the motives of Cornelius, or perhaps he is a bit embarrassed by this show of profound respect; either way he quickly ends this moment with the words "I myself also am a man." Now if Peter had been the Pope, as some would claim, he would not have been so modest. Instead, he would have expected and relished this attention.
27 And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together.

The audience of Cornelius's family and close friends is waiting in high anticipation of the arrival of Peter, as well they should have been. This day is to mark a turning point for the human family for all time. God has now decreed the Gentiles are subject to the gospel. The gospel, from this time forward, is to be preached to all nations. The barriers between Jews and Gentiles are about to be broken down forever.

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

And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation: This explanation is probably for the benefit of the six Jews who accompany Peter as much as it is for the audience of Gentiles. They are expected to be witnesses for Peter, and in order to do so they need a clear understanding of the procedures. It is doubtful we can fully appreciate the prejudice that developed between the Jews and Gentiles over the years. Following is a description of the situation that Peter calls "unlawful." Maybe this explanation will help us to understand the difficult position in which Peter now finds himself.
Unlawful comes from *athemitos*, which means contrary to custom, or law, a violation of established order. Such social segregation as Peter here says is unlawful was not commanded explicitly by Moses; but it did seem to be implied in his law, and was the common understanding of the Jews. Moses forbade alliances by contract, or marriage, with the surrounding nations, which were idolatrous (Leviticus 18:24-30. Deuteronomy 7:3-12, Ezra 9:11,12). This command the Jews perverted, and explained it as referring to social activities of all kinds, even to the exercise of friendly offices and commercial transactions. The strict Jew would not enter a Gentile’s house, nor sit on the same couch, nor eat nor drink out of the same vessel (compare Mark 7:3,4). God had not commanded such segregation as the Jews interpreted. Now the position in which Peter found himself was strangely unfamiliar, so much so, that he can scarcely help apologizing, even to Romans, for his conduct. He goes on to explain why his conduct is now different from what the ordinary Jew’s would be (Reese 312-313).

*but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean:* Peter now fully realizes the rooftop vision included men who are not to be counted unclean. In particular, it meant the Gentiles.

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

*Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for:* In spite of a lifetime of teaching to the contrary, Peter puts aside his personal feelings and, without contradicting or saying anything against (gainsaying) the order of God, makes a speedy trip to the house of Cornelius.
I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me: The messenger from Cornelius states the purpose for sending for Peter in verse 22. It seems Peter wants to hear it directly from Cornelius.

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

At the request of Peter, Cornelius begins to relate the events that had transpired some "four days" previously. He describes the angel who appeared unto him as a "man in bright clothing." Luke often uses the description of "bright" or "white" apparel in describing an angel (1:10).

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

This is a repetition of the information given in verse 2. The most significant difference in the information given here and that given in verse 2 is the fact that it is noted that the prayers of Cornelius are heard by God (see notes on verse 2 for comments).

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

This verse is a repetition of the information given in verses 5 and 6. The very fact that Cornelius is privy to such details as Peter's name and residence should have helped Peter to understand what is happening is truly under the direction of God.
33 Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come.

Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.

Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. There are two thoughts that can be gained from this verse. First, it seems Cornelius is most grateful for the courage of Peter and thanks him for coming; "thou hast well done." Vincent says "well" means, "You have done a courteous and handsome thing in coming" (502).

Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God: Secondly, Cornelius declares "we are all here ... to hear all things." With such an audience and such a preacher with such a message, great things are sure to happen!

All things" could hardly have failed to ring a bell in Peter's heart; for he had heard the Lord command that "all nations" should be taught "all things" whatsoever Jesus commanded (Matt. 28:18-20). His duty, therefore was crystal clear, for here was a Gentile household belonging to the "all nations," declaring that they were assembled to hear "all things" the Lord commanded (Coffman 213).

Before entering into the content of Peter's sermon, it is necessary that we note the chronology of the events as they are happening. This is necessary because there are those who would contend that Cornelius is saved at some point before he is baptized in water. It is evident that the Holy Spirit falls upon Cornelius and his household before Peter preaches to them. "And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them" (Acts 11:15). This account does not contradict the record in Acts 10:44: "While Peter yet spake...." The point is the Holy Spirit falls upon the household of Cornelius at the beginning of Peter's statement. It is very likely Peter would
never have preached the gospel to Cornelius if the Holy Spirit had not fallen upon them (Acts11:17). For a more complete commentary with an explanation of the implications involved, see notes on Acts11:4-17.

34 Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:
35 But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

In this one momentous statement, Peter wipes away the privileged position the Jews have held under the Mosaic covenant. This verse should also eliminate the erroneous doctrine of an arbitrary predestination for certain men. In this inspired pronouncement, we learn that God respects not persons as such but rather those persons who "fear him, and work righteousness."

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

By the standards of most modern denominations, Cornelius would already have received recognition as a Christian (see notes on verse 6); but this situation is not the case in the mind of Peter. He proceeds to preach unto Cornelius "words whereby he might be saved" (11:14).

Peter continues his discourse by stating that "the word," the gospel, which offers man peace through Jesus Christ, was first sent to the Jews. But Jesus is not just Lord to the Jews; He is Lord to all men.
37 That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached;

That word, I say, ye know: Peter assumes Cornelius and his friends are already aware of the basic elements of the "glad tidings" of Jesus Christ. The gospel has had such extensive publication through the world of that day that one would have had to be locked in a closet not to have heard the story of Jesus. It is certain that one as concerned with spiritual matters as Cornelius would "know."

which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached: Peter begins his brief outline of the life of Jesus with Jesus' baptism by John. Quickly the fame of Jesus spread throughout all of Judaea primarily because of his miracles that began with the miracle at the wedding in Cana of Galilee (John 2:1-11).

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

How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: This is a reference to the time Jesus is anointed with the Holy Spirit at his baptism. The Holy Spirit in the form of a dove descends from heaven and alights on Jesus (Matthew 3:16-17; Luke 3:22;).

who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him: It is an established fact that Jesus is known for his good deeds. He works many miracles of healing the sick and casting out of demons. The ultimate purpose of these miracles is to confirm that Jesus is truly the Son of God (2:22).
39 And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree:

And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem: "We" indicates the apostles are witnesses of the ministry of Jesus both in the regions of Judea and in the city of Jerusalem (1:8).

whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Let no modern Jew say that the Jews are not responsible for the death of Jesus. "They" is a reference to the Jews as the ones who slew Jesus by hanging him on a tree (see notes on 2:23).

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

The outstanding contrast given here is the comparison of what man does to Jesus and what God does for man (see notes on 3:13). This is the very cornerstone of our faith in Christianity. Jesus dies, is buried, and then rises again for the salvation of mankind (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

The fact that Christianity has for its leader Jesus Christ the Lord, who triumphed over death, makes Christianity far superior to the pagan religions whose originators are dead. Why would anyone choose for a religious leader, such a one as Confusius, Budda, etc., whose path leads only to the grave?
41 Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.

The apostles are chosen as witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus (1:8) and are, on at least three occasions, allowed to eat with Jesus after his resurrection (Luke 24:30; 24:42; John 21:13). That the apostles eat with Jesus after his resurrection is the critical test to show that Jesus is not some phantom or figment of their imagination.

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

Peter reveals yet another facet of the power that God appointed to Jesus. Jesus is to be the "Judge" of the quick, those who are alive when Judgment day comes, and the dead, those who will be resurrected at Judgment day (2 Timothy 4:1; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18).

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

To him give all the prophets witness: Peter here indicates the promises of salvation through Jesus Christ is not a new promise but one originally declared by the "prophets." These holy men of the Old Testament could see by an eye of prophecy that Jesus would "justify many" and "bear their iniquities" (Isaiah 53:11).

that through his name: It must never be forgotten that it is "through" the name of Jesus, that is, by the authority of Jesus, that man has the promise of eternal salvation (see notes on 2:38).
whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins: This statement is not to be understood as the single requirement for salvation as those of the "faith only" persuasion might contend; rather we must understand Bible belief or faith includes obedience. In chapter 11 of the book of Hebrews, we have a record of some of God's heroes who were saved by faith and obedience. In each example "faith alone" would not have saved the individual:

1. Verse 4. What did Abel do "BY FAITH?" Abel "OFFERED."
2. Verse 7. What did Noah do "BY FAITH"? Noah "MOVED and PREPARED."
   It would have been a sad day for Noah when the flood came if he would have been like many of those who trust in salvation by "faith only." God would have said, "Noah, there is a flood coming." Noah would have said, "I believe there is a flood coming." God would have said, "Noah, prepare an ark." Noah would have said, "I believe I am going to need an ark." Noah would have drowned like everyone else, but that is not the kind of faith that Noah had; his belief caused him to "MOVE" and "PREPARE."
3. Verse 8. What did Abraham do "BY FAITH?" Abraham OBEYED.

For us in the Christian age, it is also required that we "believe" and "obey." Jesus says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). This same pattern is true for Cornelius. In the next few minutes, Peter will instruct these Gentiles to be baptized (v.48).
44 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.

Peter has recited a brief history of the life and purpose of the coming of Jesus. How much more Peter would have told these Gentiles is debatable. Peter is certain to have had some mental reservations about these uncircumcised Gentiles. He now receives an indelible sign showing him that God has truly accepted the Gentiles. As Peter will say in Acts 11:15-17, "the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning, ... what was I, that I could withstand God?"

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

And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter: Those Jews who come with the Apostle Peter are astounded when the Holy Ghost is "poured out" upon those whom heretofore they counted as unworthy of such a "gift." It is certain these Jews who have observed this major milestone in the history of Christianity are called upon as witnesses of this event until their dying day.

because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost: The Jews now have been shown by this outpouring of the Holy Spirit that the Gentiles are subject to the gospel of Christ just as the Jews. It took this singular miracle to tear down the historical prejudice the Jew have against the Gentiles.
The phrase, "gift of the Holy Spirit," occurs twice in the New Testament: Acts 2:38 and here in this passage. It is plain the term "gift" indicates the Holy Spirit himself. "...on the Gentiles was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost." Peter says in verse 47 they "received the Holy Ghost," and again in Acts 11:15 he says, "the Holy Ghost fell on them." From the context it can be shown that the gift promised in Acts 2:38 and 10:45 are different in measure. The "gift of the Holy Spirit" promised to "every one of you" who will "repent and be baptized" is the non-miraculous "gift" promised to all Christians (see extensive notes on 2:38) while the "gift" spoken of here for the house of Cornelius is the baptism of the Holy Spirit in a miraculous measure, which is demonstrated by the fact that they "spoke in tongues." This is the same ("like" 11:17) gift experienced by the apostles on the day of Pentecost (2:1-4). But the fact remains that in both cases the "gift" is the Holy Spirit Himself.

The ground of amazement to the Jewish brethren was not the mere fact that these Gentiles received the Holy Spirit; for if Peter had finished his discourse, promising them the Holy Spirit on the terms which he had laid down on Pentecost, and had then baptized them, these brethren would have taken it as a matter of course that they received the Spirit. And if, after this, he had laid hands on them and imparted the miraculous gift of the Spirit, as in the case of the Samaritans, they would not have been so greatly surprised. The considerations which caused the amazement were, first, that the Holy Spirit was "poured out" upon them directly from God, as it had never been before on any but the apostles; and second, that this unusual gift was bestowed on Gentiles. ... The fact that this gift of the Spirit was manifested by the miracle of speaking in tongues distinguishes it from the gift of the Spirit promised to all who repent and are baptized (ii. 38); and the fact that it came directly from heaven, without the imposition of apostolic hands, distinguishes it from such gifts as that bestowed on the Samaritans, and that afterward bestowed on prominent members of many churches. We have no event with which to classify it except the gift bestowed on the apostles on Pentecost;
and thus it is actually classified by Peter farther on (xi. 15,16). He says: "As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them, even as on us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized in water, but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit; and these two are the only events that are thus designated in the New Testament. The one was the divine expression of the admission of the Jews into the new Messianic kingdom, and the other, that of the first Gentiles (McGarvey, Vol. I 213-215).

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

The Jewish witnesses to these events realize the Gentiles have received the "gift of the Holy Spirit" when the Spirit manifests himself by endowing these Gentiles with the miraculous ability to speak with "tongues." This incident follows the pattern established on the day of Pentecost when the apostles also are "baptized" in the Holy Spirit; they too speak with "tongues." These "tongues" are not some ecstatic utterance understood only by God, as some claim today, but are foreign languages miraculously spoken by direction of the Holy Spirit (see notes on 2:1-4).

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

Peter now realizes beyond a shadow of a doubt the Gentiles are subject to the gospel of Christ. He is ready to teach them the need for baptism in water for the remission of their sins.

Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized: Peter asks a question of his Jewish witnesses to which they all know the answer. Are there any here, regardless of their former biases, who will stand in opposition to this revelation made known by God? What man would dare withhold what God has ordained?
which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we: In this phrase, "we" refers to the apostles. The house of Cornelius has received the Holy Spirit as a "gift" as the apostles did on the day of Pentecost (2:1-4; 11:17).

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

And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord: Did we not say that great things will happen when a group of earnest seekers gets together with one who will tell them "words, whereby thou… shalt be saved?" The house of Cornelius receives the gospel of Christ, and they obey the terms of salvation, including the command "to be baptized in the name of the Lord."

Then prayed they him to tarry certain days: This verse draws to a close the series of events that lead to the first opportunity for the Gentiles to accept the gospel of Christ. How long Peter tarries with the house of Cornelius we have no record, but we do know Peter is called upon to explain his involvement with these uncircumcised Gentiles in chapter 11.

The following can be learned from this study:

1. The coming of the Holy Spirit to Cornelius does not save him. Cornelius is told to send for Peter who will tell him "words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved" (11:14). It is obedience to these "words" (the gospel) that saves Cornelius (Hebrews 5:8,9; Acts 10:47-48; 2:38; 8:38).
2. One may conclude that Peter would not have preached the gospel to Cornelius if it had not been for the coming of the Holy Spirit. It takes the same miracle that the apostles experience on Pentecost to convince Peter that God is now ready to accept the Gentiles under the conditions of the gospel (11:17). (For the exact chronology of events, see notes on 11:4-17.)

This exceptional gift was bestowed, in this instance, to remove the scruples which "those of the circumcision" might otherwise have felt as to admitting Gentiles, as such, to baptism; and having served that purpose, as a crucial instance, was never afterwards, so far as we know, repeated under like conditions (Plumptre 71).

3. Cornelius, this one time righteous Gentile who by nature kept the Law, is now made subject to the gospel of Christ.

4. Peter has now realized the promise given him by Jesus in Matthew 16:19 when he was promised the "keys of the kingdom." Peter has now used the "keys" (the gospel) to open the kingdom to both Jews (on the day of Pentecost) and here for the Gentiles. What a grand privilege to be the first one to preach the gospel to both Jews and Gentiles!

5. The prophesy of Joel (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:16-17) has been fulfilled. With this event, the Spirit of God has been "poured out upon all flesh," that being both Jew and Gentile (see notes on 2:16-17).
6. With the bringing in of the Gentiles to the fold of God, Christianity takes an entirely new thrust. It was God's will that the gospel be offered first to the Jews (Romans 1:16), but for the most part the nation of Israel rejected the gospel call; now as the Apostle Paul says, "from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles" (18:6). It is the Gentiles who will soon comprise the vast majority of those who make up the kingdom of the Lord.

It would be most interesting to know more of the life and times of noble Cornelius, this first Gentile Christian; but the divine text furnishes us with no more evidence. There are many unanswerable questions concerning Cornelius, but this commentary will come to a close with one interesting and important comment made by McGarvey:

We should be glad to know more of Cornelius, so as to judge whether, even in times of peace, the profession of arms was considered by the apostles compatible with the service of the Prince of Peace. He is the only soldier of whose conversion we have account in the New Testament, and of his subsequent career we know nothing. Not many years afterward the army in which he held a commission visited a most cruel and unjust war upon the Jews, and whether he continued in the service through that period we can never know in this life. Let it be noted, however, that this is an instance of a soldier becoming a Christian, not of a Christian becoming a soldier. It furnishes a precedent for the former, but not for the latter (Vol. I 218).
Chapter 11

The brethren in Jerusalem soon hear of the conversion of the household of Cornelius. It should be understood that they harbor the same resentment against the Gentiles that Peter at one time held; therefore, it is no surprise that Peter is called upon to make a defense of his conduct in associating with these "uncircumcised" Gentiles.

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

There is no way to know how long Peter "tarried" (10:48) with his new Gentile brethren, but it is evident that the news of their "receiving the word of God" beat him back to Jerusalem. It is amazing that in a day of no modern communication, information could be spread so rapidly. It is certain that news of an event with such monumental implications would be a top priority among the brethren.

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

And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem: After an unknown period of time, Peter makes his way from Caesarea back to Jerusalem.
**They that were of the circumcision:** This is a reference to the Christians who have been converted from Judaism. Up until this time, the Jews (they of the circumcision) are the only Christians. "From this point Luke distinguishes Christians into two classes--those of the circumcision and those of the uncircumcision; calling the former Jews, and the latter Gentiles or Greeks" (Vincent 503, 504).

It is most likely that at this point in time there begins to form a party in the Lord's church that will later be referred to as "the circumcision" (15:1; Galatians 2:12). These would argue that in addition to the gospel one must be circumcised to be saved. These Judaizing disciples and their false teaching concerning the Law cause many problems for the early church. The primary reason for the book of Galatians is Paul's effort to defeat the erroneous teaching of "those of the circumcision."

There is a secondary point that might be noted from this challenge to the Apostle Peter by his brethren. It is very obvious that Peter is not recognized as the pope. If Peter had been the pope as some claim, they would have immediately submitted to whatever he chose to do because he would have been considered "infallible in religious matters."

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

**Saying, Thou wentest in:** Campbell explains the clause, "Thou wentest in, does not, in our style, represent the sense, as well as, you associated with" (76). Peter is being challenged for associating with Gentiles.

to men uncircumcised: These words are used in a derisive way to refer to the Gentiles. The literal Greek, "men with a foreskin" (Plumptre 72), is an indignant expression.
and didst eat with them: It is incredulous to these Jews to imagine the Apostle Peter’s having any social relations with these “unwashed” Gentiles, but actually to “eat with them” demanded an explanation.

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

Peter seems to be very confident in the actions he has taken with the household of Cornelius. He does not hesitate to give a thorough, chronological account of the events. He seems to realize that a clear straightforward statement of the facts is the best defense for his actions. The key words in his “rehearsal” of the events are “from the beginning” and “by order.” The thoroughness of the divine record is about to be shown once again. When Peter finishes his account, he leaves no doubts nor reasons for errors in the minds of his inquisitors. There should be neither mistakes nor misunderstandings about what happened with Cornelius that day.

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

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

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

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

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

10 And this was done three times: and all were drawn up again into heaven.
11 And, behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Caesarea unto me.

12 And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house:

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

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

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

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

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

Thus, Peter begins at the beginning to give account of his actions with the Gentiles. Instead of a repetition of comments on these events, a summation of this dramatic step that is to offer salvation through Jesus Christ to the Gentiles is in order. For specific details on these verses, see notes on 10:9-48.

Following, as Peter might say, are the essential facts “from the beginning” and “by order:”

1. Peter experiences the vision of the "sheet" let down from heaven (5-10).

2. The servants of Cornelius arrive to request that Peter go to the house of Cornelius so that he could tell them "words whereby" they may be saved (11-14). It is made plain the baptism of the Holy Spirit does not save Cornelius, but rather his salvation depends upon obedience to the "words" that Peter tells him (Romans 1:16).
3. The Holy Spirit falls upon the house of Cornelius as Peter "began to speak" (15). Peter does not teach the gospel to Cornelius until after this miraculous coming of God's Spirit.

4. If it had not been for this baptism of the Holy Spirit coming to the Gentiles, Peter would not have preached to Cornelius. The purpose of the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the Gentiles is to cause Peter to realize that "what God has cleansed," he is not to count as unclean (9) and that he will be "withstanding God" (17) if he refuses to allow the Gentiles to obey the gospel.

5. Peter correctly connects the coming of the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles with the baptism of the Holy Spirit the apostles received on Pentecost (16-17; 2:1-4). Peter says God had given "them" (the Gentiles) the "like gift" (same gift) that he had given the apostles "at the beginning" (the day of Pentecost, 2:1-4). It is a logical inference from these words that from the day of Pentecost to the calling of the Gentiles, no similar display of the Spirit had been given. The interval between Pentecost and this event is (at least) seven or eight years.

... the Holy Spirit, in its public manifestations of supernatural gifts, descended only twice--at the commencement of the reign of Christ among the Jews, A.D. 33 and among the Gentiles, A.D. 41. Now the Holy Spirit is given to them that believe, as the Holy Guest, to dwell in their hearts ... (Campbell 77-78).
It becomes clear the miraculous event of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is restricted to these two occasions, upon the Jewish apostles at Pentecost and upon the Gentiles here. The Spirit of God has now been poured out upon "all flesh" (both Jew and Gentile). In spite of those who claim to have received the "baptism of the Holy Spirit," this phenomenon occurs only on these two occasions. Today we are not waiting for the baptism of the Holy Spirit for our salvation. Make no mistake about it, the baptism of the Holy Spirit does not save the apostles on Pentecost nor does it save the house of Cornelius. Salvation requires obedience to the gospel of Christ (John 8:24; Luke 13:3; Matthew 10:32; Acts 2:38).

That Cornelius and the apostles receive the "like gift" (same gift), the scholars are in agreement. In order to make crystal clear the meaning of the word "like" as used in "like gift" (isos dorea), note the following definitions of the Greek word isos (like):

...equal in quality or in quantity (Thayer 307-1-2470).

... the equal gift, is the same gift (Campbell 78).

Lit., equal; making them, equally with us, recipients of the Holy Spirit (Vincent 505).

... equal (the same in size, quality, etc.) (Vine, Vol. II 342).
18 When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

**When they heard these things, they held their peace:** When the Jewish brethren at Jerusalem hear this explanation, they cease their rebuking of Peter. They have no recourse but to accept the fact that God has opened the kingdom of heaven to the Gentiles. This incident should forever end the dissension over circumcision as being a requirement in the Christian age, but it does not. Some of the strong Jews who are converted to Christ try to bind such Old Testament teachings as circumcision and other Jewish ceremonies upon the church of Christ. Remnants of these ideas are held today by those professing Christianity yet binding such Old Testament teachings as keeping the Sabbath, tithing, burning incense, etc.

**and glorified God:** Not only do these Jews understand the reason for the events just revealed by Peter, they praise God for what has happened.

**saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance:** To repent, in a spiritual sense, may be defined as a change of mind that produces a change of life. Repentance is something that men must do, and the opportunity for repentance is provided by the grace of God. By definition the word "repentance," as used here, means "to give one the ability to repent" (Thayer 406-1-3341). Until the gospel is made available to the household of Cornelius, the "ability to repent" has not been available to the Gentiles.
unto life: It is of particular note how the translators of the New Testament use the little word "unto."

1. Faith is "unto" righteousness (Romans 10:10).
2. Repentance is "unto" life (as here).
3. Confession is "unto" salvation (Romans 10:10).
4. Baptism is the one particular act of obedience that puts us "INTO" Christ (Galatians 3:27) and "INTO" the one body (1 Corinthians 12:13).

"Life" is a reference to eternal life in heaven. The hundreds of years the Gentiles have spent in the shadow of the Jewish world have come to an end. A new day dawns and life springs eternal for all of mankind who will fear God and work righteousness.

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

Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen: Luke, our historian, now returns to the account of the dispersion of the Lord's church, which began with persecution after the death of Stephen (8:1). We have previously learned of the spread of the gospel by Philip to Samaria, Paul to Damascus, and Peter to Joppa and Caesarea. Now we learn the disciples have spread the gospel as far north as Antioch.

travelled as far as Phenice: "Phoenicia was a district, about 120 miles long, and 15 miles wide, which lay to the north of Palestine on the shores of the Mediterranean and on the slopes of the Lebanon mountains. Its chief cities were Tyre, Sidon, and Tripolis. It formed part of the Roman province of Syria" (Reese 326).
and Cyprus: Cyprus is a small island off the southern coast of Asia Minor in the Mediterranean Sea.

and Antioch: There are two cities by this name mentioned in the New Testament. One is located in Pisidia in Asia Minor; and the other, the one referred to here, is located in Syria.

The modern city of Antioch with a mere 30,000 inhabitants is not to be taken as anything like the Queen City of the East with its half a million souls at the time of the events in this chapter. Situated astride the Orontes river, some twenty miles from the sea,..." (Coffman 229).

It was built by Seleucus Nicanor, and was called Antioch in honour of his father Antiochus. It was founded three hundred and one years before Christ. ... It was long the most powerful city of the East, and was inferior only to Seleucia and Alexandria. It was famous for the fact that the right of citizenship was conferred by Seleucus on the Jews as well as the Greeks and Macedonians, so that here they had the privilege of worship in their own way without molestation (Barnes 183).

The city is also known for its heathenism and social decadence. One must be amazed at the success the gospel has in this stronghold of immorality. The following descriptions allow us an estimation of the wickedness of this city:

The groves of Daphne, in the outskirts of the city, were famous for a worship which in its main features resembled that of Aphrodite at Corinth. An annual festival was held, known as the Maiuma, at which the harlot-priestesses, stripped of clothing, disported themselves in the waters of a lake. The city was stained with the vices of a reckless and shameless sensuality. It was as one of the strongholds of Satan; and we have to
trace, as it were, the stages of the victory which transformed it into the mother-church of the Gentiles (Plumptre 73).

It is probable that no populations have ever been more abandoned than those of oriental Greek cities under the Roman Empire, and of these cities Antioch was the greatest and the worst. ... Thus, if any city, in the first century, was worthy to be called the Heathen Queen and Metropolis of the East, that city was Antioch (Conybeare and Howson 116).

It is a tribute to the power of the gospel of Christ when we see the transformation in the lives of men who are literally surrounded by sin in such cities as Corinth and Antioch. Take heart, the blood of Christ can make the vilest sinner clean!

**preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only:** This preaching to the Jews only is soon to change as the news reaches these disciples that the Gentiles are now to be received. The gospel was to the "Jew first" (Romans 1:16) but now also to the Gentile.

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

**And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene:** Some of the disciples who have been dispersed from Jerusalem are citizens of Cyprus and Cyrene. For notes on these locations, see 11:19 and 2:10.

**which, when they were come to Antioch:** These disciples are gradually spreading the gospel to the north. They now arrive in Antioch.
spake unto the Grecians: In verse 19, we learn that the gospel is preached to the "Jews only" in Phenice and Cyprus. But, by the time they reach the city of Antioch, they are also preaching to the "Grecians" (Gentiles). We must conclude that the conversion of Cornelius has reached the ears of these disciples and they are now preaching to the Gentiles.

preaching the Lord Jesus: To preach Jesus involves preaching the things concerning citizenship in the kingdom of God (see notes on 8:35).

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

And the hand of the Lord was with them: This is the explanation for the success of the gospel in such a wicked city as Antioch. When the seed (word of God) is planted and watered, God will give the increase (1 Corinthians 3:6).

and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord: This phrase should not be misconstrued to mean that believing and turning to the Lord are the same step. The teaching is a "great number believed and turned unto the Lord." "Believing" the word is the first step; "turning to the Lord" is the second step. In Acts 18:8, we have a parallel statement that says, "... and many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized."

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

When the news of the success of the gospel reaches the brethren at Jerusalem, Barnabas is dispatched to assist the effort. For comments on this able preacher named Barnabas, see Acts 4:36.
23 Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.

Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad: When Barnabas reaches the city of Antioch and sees the success of the gospel in that great city, he rejoices.

and exhorted them all: Barnabas, "the Son of Exhortation" (see notes on 4:36), knowing the trials and temptations that would surely fall upon the faithful in such sinful surroundings, lives up to his name by exhorting them to remain true to their calling.

that with purpose of heart: He exhorts them to "purpose" in their hearts (determine in their minds) to remain faithful. Vincent explains the word "purpose" as "Something set before one as an object of attainment: a purpose" (505).

they would cleave unto the Lord: Whenever the term "cleave" is used, it should be understood as having a very strong connotation, not merely a concept of loyalty but literally one of being "glued to" the Lord. Ethelbert W. Bullinger gives this definition: "to glue, cement, to join fast together" (155).

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

For he was a good man: It is not often that the divine writers indulge in words of praise for specific individuals. Because this is the case, we are given a special appreciation for the talent and character of Barnabas.
and full of the Holy Ghost: This is not a reference to miraculous spiritual gifts but rather to the indwelling Spirit that is manifest in Barnabas by the abundance of the "fruit of the Spirit" that he produces. There are those who will maintain that "full of the Holy Ghost" indicates they are full of the Holy Spirit in the miraculous sense. If that is the case, why does the writer also mention "and of faith" since faith is one of the gifts of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:9)? Barnabas is “full of the Holy Ghost” in the same way the seven of Acts 6 are (see more extensive notes on “full of the Holy Ghost,” in Acts 6:3).

and of faith: Barnabas is also “full of faith.” Barnabas is a man of settled convictions in the word of God, causing him to be "full of faith" (Romans 10:17). He has the knowledge that gives him a love and trust in God, a living appreciation for the sacrifice of Jesus, and a good understanding of the doctrines of Christ; his sights are set on heaven.

Here is additional evidence that shows the Holy Spirit dwells in every Christian in addition to faith. For those who would insist the Holy Spirit dwells in one only by faith, it should be noted that Barnabas is full of both the Holy Spirit and of faith (see notes on 2:38; 6:5).

and much people was added unto the Lord: Remember when the work is done (sowing and watering), God will give the increase (1 Corinthians 3:6). "Much people" literally means a great multitude, perhaps into the thousands. Again, may we praise the power of the gospel and the efforts of these dedicated servants of the Lord for bringing "much people" out of this cesspool of moral darkness to the light of Jesus Christ.
25 Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul:

The wording of this verse seems to indicate Barnabas has some difficulty in finding Paul. He literally has to "hunt up" (Vincent 505) Paul.

There is some question as to the reason Barnabas seeks to bring Paul into the work at Antioch. Following are several reasons that make the answer seem obvious. Paul is a much-needed additional worker. Paul and Barnabas are well acquainted (9:27). It is probable Barnabas is led by inspiration to call the apostle who is to be the "apostle to the Gentiles" to this first great work with the Gentiles (see notes on 9:15).

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

And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people: The evangelism of the Gentiles now begins in earnest. With the combined efforts of Saul and Barnabas, this heathenish stronghold of the devil feels the double-edged cutting power of the word of God with telling results. In the space of a year, "much people" come under the influence of the gospel. It has been estimated that at one time the Christian population in Antioch may have been "more than a hundred thousand members" (Coffman 230).
And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch: Until this point in religious history, the followers of Jesus have been called by such names as disciples, saints, brethren, those of the Way. But now they are to have a "new name" (Isaiah 62:2) "better than of sons and of daughters (Isaiah 56:5)." God declares, "I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off" (Isaiah 56:5).

There is much discussion as to who it is who first calls the disciples Christians. Some will assert the heathen population of Antioch gives the title in derision. There is no scriptural, logical, nor historical reason that will substantiate this idea. To the contrary, the name Christian not only distinguishes the disciples of Christ, but proves to be the "most potent name that has ever been applied to a body of men" (McGarvey, Vol. I 228). Others contend the disciples called themselves by the name Christian. This does not seem to be the case as the scripture states the disciples "were called," indicating that someone else did the calling.

The evidence seems to indicate overwhelmingly the name Christian is a name appointed by God and first given by the chosen "name bearer," the Apostle Paul. Jesus tells Ananias concerning the Apostle Paul, "he is a chosen vessel unto me to bear my name before the Gentiles" (9:15). Who would deny that the "apostle of the Gentiles" (Romans 11:13), the chosen vessel to bear the name of Christ “the Apostle Paul himself, first uses the divine designation "Christian" to refer to the disciples of Christ? Now both Jewish disciples and Gentile disciples have a "new name" under which they may all unite to fight the good fight.

It might also be noted, "The Greek word kaleo ("call") is almost always used in the scriptures with the meaning "divinely called" (see Matthew 2:12; Luke 2:26; Acts 10:22; Hebrews 8:5)" (Reese 331). Thus, the disciples were "divinely called" or "divinely" given the name Christian "first at Antioch."
The name is used only two other times: Peter encourages those who "suffer as a Christian" (1 Peter 4:16), and later in the book of Acts (26:28) Agrippa is "almost persuaded to be a Christian."

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

While Saul and Barnabas are working in Antioch, "prophets" are also apparently dispatched from Jerusalem to Antioch. This is the first mention of the office of "prophets" among Christians. The office of "prophet" appears to rank next to the office of apostle in authority (1 Corinthians 12:28) and, like the apostolic office, is temporary. By inspiration, the prophets speak the word of God concerning particular events, especially those yet in the future (Ephesians 2:20; 4:11).

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

And there stood up one of them named Agabus: The prophet, who is here signified by the name Agabus, will prove himself to be a harbinger of gloom and doom for the Apostle Paul. Here he predicts a "great dearth" (famine); later (21:10-11) he will appear again to predict the binding of Paul and his being delivered into the hands of the Gentiles.

and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: Through the direct inspiration of God's Holy Spirit, Agabus is able to predict the coming of a severe famine upon the earth. A famine ("dearth") is a time of extreme shortage of food usually caused by a lack of enough rain to produce crops.
which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar: The mention of Claudius Caesar helps to establish the time frame for the events just recorded. His reign began in 41 A.D. and lasted until 54 A.D. History records Claudius as one of the better Roman Caesars with a few exceptions. "Claudius married several times. When he married his niece Agrippina the Younger, he adopted her son Nero. Some historians believe Agrippina murdered Claudius so that Nero could become emperor" (World Book Encyclopedia, Vol. 4 502b).

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

Then the disciples, every man according to his ability: It seems to be implied that the collection for the saints in Judaea actually begins to be taken up before the famine strikes. The gifts are given in proportion to the ability of the giver. If one has much, he gives more while the one who has less gives less. This principle of giving as "God hath prospered" stands as the guideline for giving even until today (1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 9:1-15).

determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: What a generous and noble thing for these new Gentile converts to do. It would have been easy for these Gentiles, who have suffered the scorn of the Jews for literally hundreds of years, to turn a deaf ear to the needs of their Jewish brethren; but that would not have been the right thing to do. The "middle wall of partition" has been torn down, "the enmity" has been "slain," the blood of Jesus has made them one; therefore, the right thing to do is to send aid to their new brothers who are in distress (Ephesians 2:13-18). These brethren are willing to hazard their own welfare for the concerns of others. Paul and Barnabas have succeeded in Antioch not only in preaching the requirements of salvation but also in instilling the principle of brotherly love in these new Christians.
Today the story might be different. In the "ME" generation in which we live, some would be far more interested in how "I" am going to fare in the famine rather than being concerned about distant brethren. Here is the proper example for us; may we be willing to emulate the good deeds of our noble Gentile forefathers.

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

Which also they did, and sent it to the elders: This is the first time "elders" are mentioned as officers in the New Testament church. As indicated here, the elders are the ones in authority over the church; therefore, it would be considered the proper thing to do to take the contributions to the elders for distribution. The divine arrangement for the guidance of the Lord's church is based on the oversight of scripturally appointed elders. For the qualifications necessary to become an elder, see 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 (see notes on 14:23).

by the hands of Barnabas and Saul: Barnabas and Saul are probably more than happy to take a few days out of their evangelistic work to carry the evidence of the generosity of these Gentile Christians to their Jewish brethren. Such an act of fellowship must have strengthened the bond between the predominantly Jewish church at Jerusalem and the primarily Gentile church at Antioch.
Luke does not continue his account of the journey of Paul and Barnabus to Jerusalem but instead picks up on the life of Peter and the disciples in Jerusalem as they deal with the oppression of wicked King Herod. This chapter chronicles the dramatic intervention of God on behalf of his children, which will include the demise of pompous King Herod.

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

Now about that time: This phrase refers to the time Saul and Barnabus make their trip to take the collection gathered by the saints in Antioch to the famine stricken brethren in Jerusalem. "About that time was A.D. 44, as Herod's death occurred in this year..." (Boles 187).

Herod the king: The Herod here referred to is Herod Agrippa I. The name Herod is the surname used by all the linage of Herod the Great. Merrill F. Unger gives the following comment on the name Herod:

It belonged alike to all the Herodian house as known to the Scriptures. All descendants of Herod the Great down to the fourth generation, who were identified with the government of Palestine and are mentioned in the New Testament, are known in history by the surname Herod; Herod Archaelaus, Herod Antipas, Herod Philip II, Herod Agrippa I, and Herod Agrippa II (470).
It is little wonder that this Herod has murderous intentions toward the people of God. His pedigree contains several infamous characters who opposed the purposes of God. His grandfather was the Herod who had the babies of Bethlehem slaughtered in hopes he would destroy the baby Jesus. He is a nephew to the Herod who had John the Baptist slain. Now, Herod Agrippa I forever enshrines his name in infamy as the one guilty of the blood of the first apostle to be martyred.

**stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church:** Herod, not unlike politicians of today, must have been checking the popularity polls when he learns it will make him politically popular to oppress the Christians (verse 3); therefore, he takes it upon himself to bring a violent attack upon the Lord’s church. Vincent says the word “vex” is used “in the older and stronger sense of torment or oppress ... rather than its modern usage of petty annoyances” (508).

It has been about eight years since the martyrdom of Stephen. During this time the church has enjoyed relative peace, but now severe persecution again raises its ugly head. Herod may have won the appreciation of the Jews, but he has lost any respect he may have had in the eyes of God. By divine intervention this proud Herod Agrippa I is soon to be "eaten of worms" (verse 23).

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

**And he killed James the brother of John:** How different is such an event recorded in history by divine inspiration from what one might expect. In eleven English words, seven words in the Greek, we learn of the death of James the son of Zebedee, one of the "sons of thunder" (Mark 3:17).
It is of interest to note that it is the mother of James and John who requests of Jesus that her sons might sit "the one on the right hand and the other on the left, in thy kingdom." Jesus explains, "Ye know not what ye ask" but "ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with" (Matthew 20:20-23). James is the first apostle to die for his faith; John is the last. Both do endure sufferings and death as good soldiers of the cross.

**with the sword:** The fact that James is executed "with the sword" indicates his death is dictated by a civil power as in the case of John the Baptist (Matthew 14:10). If the Jews had been responsible for James' death, it would have been by stoning.

3 And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also.

(Then were the days of unleavened bread.)

**And because he saw it pleased the Jews:** These words are the only excuse given for the death of James. What a pitiful excuse for putting to death anyone much less this great apostle so valued by the Lord's church! It seems Herod Agrippa has fallen into the trap experienced by many politicians. In an effort to please his constituency, he is willing to sacrifice anything or anyone. Popular opinion is all that matters.

**he proceeded further to take Peter also:** Herod's murder of James is so well received by the Jews that Herod decides to outdo even his former dastardly deed by taking the most prominent of the apostles, Peter.
(Then were the days of unleavened bread.): The "days of unleavened bread" is a reference to the feast of the Passover during which the Jews are required to eat bread without leaven. Because of the crowds that gather in Jerusalem to observe this feast, it is an ideal time for Herod to show a favor to the Jews as there will be many more people in the city to witness his generosity toward them and his animosity toward the Christians.

The distinction between the "Passover" and "the feast of unleavened bread" is explained by Carl M. Johnson:

The Old Testament distinguishes between the Passover, which was observed the night of the Nisan fourteenth-fifteenth, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which lasted from the fifteenth to the twenty-first of Nisan, during the barley harvest (Exodus 12:15-20; 23:15; Leviticus 23:5-6; Numbers 28:16-17; 2 Chronicles 30:15, 21;etc.). In later Judaism, it became popular to treat them as one festival and refer to them both as the "Passover" or "the Feast of Unleavened Bread" (520-521).

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

And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison: Herod quickly follows up on the death of James with the arrest of Peter.
Evidently the king was seeking the destruction of the Jerusalem church, as the Pharisees, under the leadership of Saul, had done before; but, in contrast with their method, he sought to accomplish his purpose by beheading the leaders, rather than by persecuting the members. He doubtless congratulated himself on the wisdom of the new method, when he had succeeded in slaying one apostle, and in locking up, ready for execution, the chief man of them all (McGarvey, Vol. I 233).

**and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him:** It is for sure Herod has heard of the escape of Peter from prison on another occasion (5:18-19); therefore, he assigns sixteen soldiers to provide a constant watch over Peter. Herod has yet to learn there are not enough soldiers in all of Jerusalem or even in all the Roman empire to hold Peter in prison if it be God's will to set him free!

A quaternion was a set of four men occupied in the work of a guard, two soldiers being chained to the prisoner and two keeping watch; alternatively one of the four watched while the other three slept. The night was divided into four watches of three hours each; there would be one quaternion for each watch by day and night (Vine, Vol. III 239).

**intending after Easter:** The intentions of Herod are to wait until "after the Passover" to put Peter to death. "This refers not to Passover day, but to the whole celebration of Passover which lasted eight days" (Coffman 241).
On the term "Easter," it is most unfortunate that the translators use this word. Barnes has this to say:

There never was a more absurd or unhappy translation than this. The original is simply "after the Passover." The word "Easter" now denotes the festival observed by many Christian churches in honour of the resurrection of the Saviour. But the original has no reference to that, nor is there the slightest evidence that any such festival was observed at the time when this book was written. The translation was not only unhappy, as it does not convey at all the meaning of the original, but because it may contribute to foster an opinion that such a festival was observed in the time of the apostles. The word "Easter" is of Saxon origin, and is supposed to be derived from "Eostre," the goddess of Love, or the Venus of the North, in honour of whom a festival was celebrated by our pagan ancestors in the month of April (452-453).

In our modern celebration of Easter, one should wonder what is the purpose of eggs, rabbits, chickens, etc., in a time that is to remember the resurrection of Christ? In reality such items have no place in a Christian celebration; these are relics of a fertility rite practiced in the early spring by pagans and introduced into Christianity by the Catholics in an attempt to homogenize Christianity and paganism. Christians do not have one special day in the year to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. They celebrate the resurrection of Jesus every first day of the week by keeping the Lord's supper (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26). One "must" worship God in "spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24), not in pagan error.

**to bring him forth to the people:** It is the intention of Herod to execute Peter publicly. To do this would make a spectacle of his death which the bloodthirsty Jews would relish and perhaps Herod hopes it would be demoralizing to the remaining Christians. Little does he know his own death is nearer than is the death of Peter.
5 Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.

Peter therefore was kept in prison: It is Herod's plan to keep Peter in prison until after the days of the Passover.

but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him: In this time of perilous consequences, the church is in constant prayer on behalf of Peter. We have here a spiritual standoff of tremendous magnitude; on the one side King Herod, soldiers, chains, prison, iron gates, murderous intentions, and on the other side we have a band of faithful Christians in fervent prayer to the one "who is able to save." Are there any doubts about the outcome?

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

And when Herod would have brought him forth: After a week of anxious waiting by the disciples, the time arrives for Peter to be "brought forth" for execution.

the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison: Peter’s guards are more anxious about this situation than is Peter. They know if Peter escapes, their lives will be required of them. This is the customary penalty for allowing a prisoner to escape (verse 19). These poor guards are soon to learn that chains and bars cannot hold a child of God if it be God's will to set him free.
And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands.

And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: Here is yet another occasion when a messenger from God makes an appearance in all of his brilliance to carry out the purposes of God on earth.

For more information on "the angel of God," see notes on 5:19.

and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly: This scene is really quite remarkable; Peter, chained between two soldiers, is sound asleep, the type of sleep that a clear conscience and a calm confidence in God allows. It requires a slap on the side and the voice of the angel to rouse Peter from his sleep.

And his chains fell off from his hands: The shackles that bind Peter to the guards miraculously fall off.

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

As we will learn in the next verse, Peter is in a stupor between reality and what he thought was a vision or dream. Because he does not understand what is happening is real, it is necessary for the angel to give him explicit instructions to get dressed and put on his shoes.
9 And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision.

Peter follows the messenger of God like one in a daze, thinking these things are not real but are only a "vision." He knows not ("wist not") that he is actually being delivered out of the prison.

10 When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him:

When they were past the first and second ward: The word "ward" literally means a watch or guard. Vincent says, "Better, watch: the soldiers on guard" (509).

Probably the first and second guards spoken of in verse ten were half of the quaternion that was on guard at the time of the deliverance. The fact that they were enabled to pass by these men without detection bespeaks of some providential intervention" (De Welt 159).

they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: Peter has one last obstacle between himself and freedom, but it is no small hurdle. As Luke is inclined to do in his detailed descriptions, he tells us they come not to just an ordinary gate but to an "iron gate." It is generally understood it took several strong men to raise this gate. Peter and the angel walk up to this "iron gate," and it swings open "of its own accord" just as the electric doors at the local grocery store! Again, it is made clear: bars, chains, guards, and iron gates cannot restrain the purposes of God!
and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him: The "angel of God" stays with Peter until they are out of danger; and then, his mission finished, he departs. This is just another example of how God's purposes are carried out on earth by His holy angels.

Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation (Hebrews 1:14 )?

11 And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews.

And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod: Perhaps it is the cool night winds that fully awaken Peter or the sight of the nighttime sky that makes him realize he is really out of the prison. He is now fully alert and aware that God, by the actions of this "ministering spirit," has delivered him quite literally from death.

and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews.: It is certain the Jews will be disappointed because they earnestly desire to see Peter put to death. God has work yet for Peter. Herod and the Jews will not succeed in their murderous intentions, at least not this time.
12 And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying.

And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary: Peter now takes time to assay the position in which he finds himself. Vincent says:

The verb here translated "considered" (suneidon) "strictly means to see together, or at the same time. Hence to see in one view, to take in at a glance... He has been freed; he was there in the street alone; he must go somewhere; there was the house of Mary, where he was sure to find friends. Having taken in all this, perceived it all, he went to the house of Mary" (509).

the mother of John: There are six different Mary’s mentioned in the New Testament. This Mary is distinguished as being the mother of John Mark.

whose surname was Mark: The following description is given of John Mark:

The author of Mark is the same John Mark mentioned by Luke in the Acts of the Apostles, by Peter in I Peter 5:13, and by Paul in Colossians 4:10, Philemon 24, and 2 Timothy 4:11. John was his Jewish name and Mark his surname or Latin name. In the epistles he is referred to exclusively as Mark, indicating his ministry was almost entirely among the Gentiles. Mark was a native of Jerusalem where his mother’s house became one of the meeting places of the early Christians ... His house was where Christians assembled to pray for the imprisoned Peter and where Peter came when he was released from prison by an angel. The scriptures indicate the house was large and included a courtyard and a gate ... The description serves to suggest that John Mark's home was one of wealth and prominence (Johnson 6).
where many were gathered together praying: The disciples are following the example set earlier by the apostles (4:23-31). In this gloomy time of painful expectations with the time of Peter's death drawing near, the brethren gather to pray and to turn the hurtful suspense of the moment over to God. May this noble example be noted and carried on by Christians today.

13 And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda.

And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate: This "gate" is a small door that opens off the street into the porch or vestibule. To understand the logistics of what is happening, it will help to know how the houses of the more affluent are constructed.

There was erected a high fence or barricade some few yards out from the house. This entirely surrounded the home. In this fence there was built a gate. This was opened for use at times during the day; it was closed and locked at night. In this gate there was a small door just large enough for the entrance of one person. It was at this small door in the gate that Peter knocked (De Welt 160-161).

a damsel came to hearken: Vincent has the following to say about the word "damsel":

The word used of a young female slave, as well as of a young girl or maiden generally. The narrative implies that she was more than a mere menial, if a servant at all. Her prompt recognition of Peter's voice, and her joyful haste, as well as the record of her name, indicate that she was one of the disciples gathered to pray (510).
**named Rhoda:** "Rhoda" is a Greek word that may be translated "Rose." It was quite common for the people of the day to name their children after beautiful things in nature. What is most uncommon and striking is the fact that God forever emblazons the name of this little servant girl, Rhoda, in the pages of His eternal word. See also the notes on Dorcas in Acts 9:36-41.

14 And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate.

One can only imagine the joy this young girl feels when she recognizes the voice of Peter. In her haste to inform the others, she fails to open the gate; thus, Peter is left standing in the street.

15 And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel.

**And they said unto her, Thou art mad:** It seems the brethren assume the deliverance of Peter is so unlikely, especially in view of the death of James, they decide Rhoda has lost her mind.

**But she constantly affirmed that it was even so:** In spite of the accusations that she is insane, Rhoda is not to be dissuaded. She confidently affirms that Peter is at the gate.

**Then said they, It is his angel:** Finally the gathering is convinced that someone is at the gate. They decide it must be Peter's angel. "The thought, before they saw him, that it must be his angel, is based on the supposition that every man has an angel, which is a true Scriptural idea ..." (McGarvey, Vol. I 237).
This verse proves that in the apostolic church the Christians believed that every person has a guardian angel; but it is uncertain what deductions should be made from this fact. Jesus apparently justified such a view by his reference to the angels of little children in Matthew 18:10, as being angels of the highest rank" (Coffman 247).

A comment about "guardian angels" is in order at this place. There is ample scriptural evidence to show that angels are the agents of God used to discharge God's will on earth. These spiritual beings are referred to by the Hebrew writer as "ministering spirits" sent to minister to the "heirs of salvation" (Hebrews 1:14). Every child of God can have the assurance that God is in control of this world, that His will is being done, and that His providence is being worked in their lives (the heirs of salvation) by the efforts of His "mighty angels" (2Thessalonians 1:7). A study on the work of angels as "ministering spirits" may be found in these and other verses: 1 Kings 19:5; Psalms 34:7, 91:11; Matthew 4:11, 18:10; Luke 16:22; 22:43; Hebrews 1:13-14.

One other comment may be made, which is rather sad to consider; yet one that seems to be characteristic of doubting human beings. Here is the situation: these Christians are gathered together to pray for the deliverance of Peter; yet when it is announced that Peter has been delivered, here is their reaction:

1. The bearer of the message of Peter's deliverance is "mad."
2. It cannot be Peter it must be someone else, "his angel."
3. When they saw Peter "they were astonished."
It is small wonder that Jesus so often questions the faith of His disciples. How often does man beseech the throne of Almighty God in his prayers, yet in his heart he has no faith that God is listening? When a faithful child of God asks his Father for blessings, should he be surprised when his Father grants those blessings?

16 But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished.

But Peter continued knocking: The patience of Peter is surely being tested. While the disciples speculate as to who really is at the gate, Peter continues to knock. This must have been a frustrating experience.

and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished: There is some discussion among scholars as to why the disciples are surprised to find Peter is delivered from the prison. After all, are not they praying for his release? We can be sure the disciples are praying for the release of Peter but we can be equally sure they also pray "thy will be done." In the light of the fact that James has recently died at the hands of Herod, it could be the disciples are reconciled to the idea that the same fate will come to Peter; thus, they are surprised when Peter is delivered.

17 But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go shew these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place.

But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace: In the midst of this excitement, Peter calls for silence.
Beckoning with the hand is from the Greek *kataseisas tei cheiri,* and literally means shake down with the hand. The speaker indicated by a downward movement of the hand his desire for silence. A great noise at that time of night might excite the neighboring Jews, and could produce danger (Reese 346).

**declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison:** Peter now gives his personal account of how the Lord spares his life and delivers him from the hand of Herod. Again, we may note that Peter is correct in saying "the Lord had brought him out of prison"; but we know the actual deed is accomplished by an angel.

**And he said, Go shew these things unto James:** Peter gives instructions to relay an account of the events of his deliverance to others; especially he mentions James. It is generally agreed that the James here named is not "James the son of Alphaeus," one of the original apostles; but this James is the one identified as "the Lord's brother" (Galatians 1:19). He is one of those Paul refers to as a "pillar" of the church in Jerusalem (Galatians 2:9). This James is also credited with the authorship of the book of James.

**and to the brethren:** It is Peter's desire that the brethren know their prayers have been answered and their anxious concerns for his welfare are over.

**And he departed, and went into another place:** It can be said for a certainty that Peter is among the "most wanted" by the authorities in Jerusalem; therefore, it is necessary that he go to a place of greater safety. Where Peter goes remains a mystery in the face of much speculation. The next scriptural record of Peter's being in Jerusalem occurs about seven years after these events have transpired when he meets with the "apostles and elders" to discuss the problem over circumcision (15:6-7).
18 Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter.

**Now as soon as it was day:** The day dawns, and the events of the night are soon to be learned.

**there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter:** "No small stir" must have been the understatement of a lifetime to those soldiers who were guarding Peter. One can only guess at the horror that comes to their minds when they discover Peter is gone. The law says if a prisoner escapes, those in charge of his safekeeping forfeit their own lives.

19 And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judaea to Caesarea, and there abode.

**And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not:** The jails of Herod cannot hold this man of God. McGarvey says, "Herod, too was surprised and chagrined. He learned that he had no more skill in keeping apostles imprisoned than the chief priests before him" (Vol. I 239).

**he examined the keepers:** Again, the record understates what actually happens. These sixteen soldiers are examined for an explanation as to the escape of Peter. This examination often involved hideous forms of torture in hopes of getting the truth out of the guards. One can only pity these poor soldiers, as they can give no explanation. They are not derelict in their duties; they do all that is humanly possible to contain Peter. Luke gives the reason for the deliverance of Peter, a reason no man can thwart: "the Lord brought him forth!"
and commanded that they should be put to death: After this rigorous examination of the soldiers, there could have been no doubt in Herod's mind that the rescue of Peter is accomplished by the will of God. Will Herod admit the obvious? Of course not; he puts sixteen innocent men to death to salve his wounded pride and cover up his political fumble.

And he went down from Judaea to Caesarea, and there abode: How soon Herod leaves Jerusalem for Caesarea is uncertain. It is in Caesarea that God will terminate the activities of Herod against the church with the death of Herod.

20 And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon: but they came with one accord to him, and, having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, desired peace; because their country was nourished by the king's country.

And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon: The cause of Herod's displeasure is not known. Speculation is there is a trade dispute between the two countries. Whatever the cause of the dispute, Herod is ready to go to war. "The word "displeased" (thumomacheo) comes from the two Greek words thumos (passion) and machomai (to fight), hence to be very angry, to be highly displeased..." (Vine Vol. I 322).

Tyre and Sidon are cities in the country of Phoenicia. Following is a note on the geography of this area:
The province Phoenicia is a narrow strip of territory between the Mediterranean Sea and Mount Lebanon, north of Palestine and south of the Orontes. Its two great cities were Zidon the mother of Mediterranean commerce; and Tyre, her daughter. Its boundaries were never extensive; but its vessels traded with every land, and its colonies were planted all along the shores of the Mediterranean (Jesse Lyman Hurlbut 6).

**but they came with one accord to him, and, having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, desired peace:** The people of Tyre and Sidon are attempting to avoid this conflict by sending an ambassage in an attempt to placate Herod. They also seem to have an ally in the person of Blastus, the king's "chamberlain." More than likely, it is by bribery that these citizens of Tyre and Sidon have persuaded Blastus to help them.

Vine defines "chamberlain" as follows:

> The one over the bedchamber (ἐπι, over, κοίτων, a bedchamber), denotes a chamberlain, an officer who had various duties in the houses of kings and nobles (Vol. I 179).

**because their country was nourished by the king's country:** As a matter of geographical convenience, it is much easier and more economical for Tyre and Sidon to trade with the country that adjoins them rather than to have to travel to Egypt or some other more distant country to find the necessary food to feed their people; therefore, they are working to appease Herod so their trade relationship might be preserved.
21 And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them.

**And upon a set day Herod:** Josephus gives an explanation of the "set day" as well as a detailed description of the events of that day:

Now when Agrippa had reigned three years over all Judea, he came to the city Cesarea, which was formerly called Strato's Tower; and there he exhibited shows in honor of Ceasar, upon his being informed that there was a certain festival celebrated to make vows for his safety. At which festival a great multitude was gotten together of the principal persons, and such as were of dignity throughout his province. On the second day of which shows he put on a garment made wholly of silver (582).

**arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them:** Josephus describes the appearance of Herod as being dressed in a dazzling silver robe that catches the rays of the sun and gives him an illusion almost supernatural. In this theatrical setting, Herod delivers a speech the contents of which one can only guess. It would be safe to assume the theme of his oration is his own elite position and authority. The speech may have also contained the information that an agreement between Herod and the people of Tyre and Sidon has been reached, prompting the audience to react as recorded in the next verse.
22 And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man.

It can be safely assumed that the people of Tyre and Sidon have received the concession they sought from Herod; therefore, they burst out in praise and flattery saying, "It is the voice of a god!" Could it be that Blastus coaches the ambassadors from Tyre and Sidon to exploit a weakness of Herod by comparing him to a god? Ah, the complexities of politics, the downfall of many proud men.

23 And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.

And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him: Here is yet another example of God's will being carried out by His angel. What is about to happen to Herod is divinely appointed and swiftly carried out by this messenger from heaven.

because he gave not God the glory: Because Herod is willing to receive worship as a god rather than giving "God the glory," he is smote by the angel. This is not a sin of ignorance on the part of Herod; he is a Jew, he knows the true God, and he is aware of the evils of idolatry.

and he was eaten of worms: Luke describes the manner in which Herod dies as "he was eaten of worms." This description leaves much to the imagination, but one can be sure it denotes a slow, painful, and loathsome way in which to die.

"Worm" is from the Greek skolex, and was used of "intestinal worms;" there are several cases recorded in ancient history of such deaths. Josephus says that Herod Agrippa "lingered for five days," and says that “the rotting of his flesh produced worms..." (Boles 197).
and gave up the ghost: Herod dies. His spirit departs from him. What a simple way to state the demise of one who is a murderer of an apostle and an opponent of Christianity in general. Herod, who flinched not at robbing God of glory, now waits for judgment day to face the same Jesus whom he so bitterly opposed (Hebrews 9:27). Herod’s "death took place A.D. 44, in the seventh year of his reign, and at the age of fifty-three" (Plumptre 79).

24 But the word of God grew and multiplied.

When attempts to destroy the Lord’s church are overcome, as in the attempt just described, the end result is the church is reassured, reverence for the church increases in the general population, and the church grows. "The cause of Christ cannot be destroyed by persecution. The history of the church as revealed in Acts shows that the church multiplied more rapidly under persecution than at other times" (Boles 198). The lesson remains: adversity strengthens, "tribulation worketh patience" (Romans 5:3) (see notes on 6:7).

25 And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.

And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry:
The scene now switches back to an event that begins in Acts 11: 30. Barnabas and Saul have completed their mission of charity to the needy saints in Judea and have returned to Antioch.

and took with them John, whose surname was Mark: Saul and Barnabus have a new traveling companion in John Mark, who is a nephew to Barnabas (Colossians 4:10). Luke here takes the opportunity to introduce John Mark, who will figure prominently in subsequent chapters of Acts.
To this point in the book of Acts, the most prominent character has been the Apostle Peter. From this point to the conclusion of the book, it is the Apostle Paul's efforts in evangelism that will be recorded. With the closing of this chapter, the stage is set for evangelizing "unto the uttermost part of the earth" (1:8) with Antioch serving as the center from which the gospel is spread.
This chapter begins the second major division in the book of Acts. The first twelve chapters deal primarily with material pertaining to the Apostle Peter while the remaining chapters deal with the work of the Apostle Paul. It is with eager anticipation that the stage is now set for the narrative of Paul's first missionary journey.

1 Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers: There is some discussion as to the distinction between "prophets and teachers." McGarvey says prophets "were men who spoke by inspiration" while teachers "sometimes did and sometimes did not" (Vol. II 2) (see notes on 11:27).

as Barnabas: Barnabas is the most prominent man in Antioch; therefore, he is mentioned first in this list (see notes on 4:36).

and Simeon that was called Niger: The name Simeon is very common among the Jews; therefore, it is common to distinguish between them by use of a surname. In this case the surname is Niger, a Latin word meaning "black." This name (Niger) could have been given Simeon in reference to his physical appearance, or it could have simply been that his name is "Black," which is a very common surname.
and Lucius of Cyrene: Some of the first preachers to come to Antioch are from Cyrene (11:20), an area in north Africa. It is likely that Lucius is one of these men; thus, he is one of the founders of the church at Antioch.

and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch: The literal meaning of the words "which had been brought up with" (suntrophos) is "foster-brother." Vine gives the following definition: "Primarily denotes one nourished or brought up with another" (Vol. II 127). The indication is that Manaen is raised as a close associate (foster-brother) to Herod.

Plumptre gives an interesting comment as to how Manaen and Herod may have become associates:

In the early youth of Herod the Great, his future greatness had been foretold by an Essene prophet of the name of Menahem or Manaen (Jos. Ant. xv. 10.5). When the prediction was fulfilled, he sought to show honour to the prophet. The identity of name makes it probable that the man who now meets us was the son, or grandson, of the Essene, and that Herod had him brought up with Antipas as a mark of his favour (80).

The Herod under consideration is not Herod Agrippa I who died in chapter 12 but rather Herod Antipas the Tetrarch of Galilee. It is this man who is responsible for the death of John the Baptist (Luke 9:7-9). This is the Herod who mocks Jesus before He is crucified (Luke 23:7-12). What a contrast in these two men raised as foster-brothers: the one a valuable leader in the cause of Christ; the other a ruthless enemy of the church of Christ.

and Saul: The great apostle to the Gentiles is listed last, but he will soon show himself to be the greatest New Testament missionary of all times.
As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

As they ministered to the Lord: This is a reference to the day-to-day responsibilities of those who would be workers in the Lord’s church.

and fasted: Fasting is commonly employed for various reasons by the early disciples. "For what cause they were fasting just at this time we have no intimation; but from the instruction of the Master on the subject (Matt. ix. 15), we may safely infer that it was in consequence of some affliction which had befallen them" (McGarvey, Vol. II 3).

the Holy Ghost said: It is obvious this direct message from the Holy Spirit is given either to Simon, Lucius, or Manaen, perhaps even to all three.

Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them: The Spirit instructs that Barnabas and Saul are now to begin the work for which they are called. "That God had previously called Saul we are certain (26:16-18). But when the Lord spoke to Barnabas concerning this task we do not know, but that He did we are now assured" (De Welt 172).

It should also be noted when God selects men to carry on evangelism in foreign countries among strange peoples, He sends the most capable men available. He also sends two evangelists for obvious reasons. In the perils that are sure to be encountered, the two men can support and draw strength from each other.
3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

**And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them:** By taking this action, the church at Antioch, through its leaders, show Barnabas and Saul are given the full fellowship and good will of the whole church. This laying on of hands has nothing to do with the imparting of a spiritual gift; it is evident because Barnabas and Saul already possess miraculous abilities.

The purpose of the fasting, prayer and laying on of hands is clearly indicated in the context: for what they did was doubtless what they were told to do; but what they were told to do was to "separate" the two to the work indicated; and, therefore, fasting, praying and laying on of hands was the method of separating them. This is the ceremony deemed suitable for such a separation by those under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and it follows that on all similar occasions, such as separating a brother to the ministry of the word, or separating one who is already an experienced preacher, as were both Barnabas and Saul, to some new and different field of labor, it is proper for those concerned in the movement to lay hands on him with fasting and prayer (McGarvey, Vol. II 4).

**they sent them away:** Thus, Barnabas and Saul are sent out by the church of Antioch to begin what will become known as Paul's first missionary journey.
4 So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.

So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost: It cannot be overemphasized the part that God's Holy Spirit plays in this initial attempt to take the gospel to the whole world. This is to begin a monumental effort that will literally change the history of the world. It is God's intent that both Jew and Gentile have an opportunity to hear the gospel.

departed unto Seleucia: "Seleucia is a town near the mouth of the Orontes and the seaport of Antioch. It was built by Seleucus Nicator, ..." (Unger 992).

and from thence they sailed to Cyprus: It should be understood that the Holy Spirit is directing the course of this journey; but it also seems natural, since Cyprus is the birthplace of Barnabas, that he will want to see the gospel proclaimed on his former home island. The gospel has already been preached on Cyprus but only to the Jews (10:19-20) (For additional notes on Cyprus, see 4:36).

5 And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister.

And when they were at Salamis: "This was the principal city and seaport of Cyprus. It was situated on the southeast part of the island, and was afterward called Constantia" (Barnes 457).

"Salamis was afterward destroyed by war and earthquakes, and its site is now marked by ruins about four miles north of the modern town Famagosta" (McGarvey, Vol. II 6).
they preached the word of God: Luke’s silence on the success of preaching of the gospel in Salamis speaks volumes. We may assume the efforts of Barnabas and Saul produce no dramatic results.

in the synagogues of the Jews: There are many synagogues on the island of Cyprus attended by the large Jewish population. The disciples often take advantage of the crowds that gather at these places to preach the gospel (see notes on 6:9).

and they had also John to their minister: John Mark is here introduced by Luke as one who volunteers to assist in the work of Barnabas and Saul (see notes on 12:12).

6 And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-jesus:

And when they had gone through the isle: From the account given here, it appears Luke has little to relate concerning this trip until the disciples reach the western side of the island. The entire distance across the island of Cyprus is about 170 miles while the distance from Salamis to Paphos is about 100 miles.

unto Paphos: This one time glorious city known for its idolatry "is now an insignificant village called Baffa, or Bafo" (McGarvey, Vol. II 7). Barnes describes Paphos as follows:

Paphos was a city at the western extremity of the island. It was the residence of the proconsul, and was distinguished for a splendid temple erected to Venus, who was worshipped throughout the island (457).
**they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew:** As is usually the case, there is always someone who is willing to step in and do all that he can to hinder the progress of the gospel. In verse 10, Paul describes this renegade Jew as "thou child of the devil and enemy of all righteousness" (see notes on 8:9).

The Greek word translated "sorcerer" is *magos*. The magi were originally a Median priestly caste, but in later Greek and Roman times the word was used more generally of practitioners of all sorts of magic and quackery (Bruce 264).

The Christian should be aware that God has never approved of those who would practice the black arts (Exodus 22:18; Leviticus 20:6). Such practices as fortune telling, star gazing, horoscopes, Ouija boards, attempts to communicate with the dead, etc., should not be dabbled in by true believers in Jesus Christ. People who claim to be witches, wizards, warlocks, mediums, fortunetellers, etc., should be avoided because they represent this dark side of life God condemns. It is a frightening thing in this modern age to see those supposedly educated, supposedly Christian, people who depend on this sinister practice of black magic for guidance in their lives. Jesus came to dispel darkness, superstition, and ignorance; in spite of this fact, many still prefer to listen to these "children of the devil."

**whose name was Bar-jesus:** "The word ‘Bar’ is Syriac, and means son. Jesus or Joshua, was not an uncommon name among the Jews" (Barnes 457).
7 Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God.

**Which was with the deputy of the country:** It seems this crafty Bar-Jesus has worked himself into the confidence of Sergius Paulus and serves as one of his advisors. This "false prophet" realizes that if Barnabas and Saul have any influence with the proconsul he will be out of a job; therefore, he does all he can to defeat the power of the gospel. This is still the work of false teachers and preachers today; they are tools of the devil who will do all within their power to keep someone from learning the truth!

**Sergius Paulus:** This man is referred to as the "deputy of the country." The term "deputy" is an old English word that is better rendered "proconsul."

For a long time, modern skeptics contended that Luke here made a mistake in styling Sergius Paulus a proconsul. They alleged he should have been called "governor." ...In the years since the skeptics first assailed the historicity of Luke, coins and inscriptions of this era have been found... Still later, at Soli, a coin with the inscription "Paulus the proconsul" was found; and Luke's veracity is again affirmed" (Reese 361, 362).

A picture of such a coin may be seen in Conybeare and Howson on page 138.

**a prudent man:** Vine defines "prudent man" as "a man of understanding" (Vol. III 229). In opposition to the counsel of the false prophet, Bar-jesus, Sergius Paulus, this "man of understanding," has the good sense to listen to the word of God.
who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God: It is pure speculation as to the motive behind Sergius Paulus' desire to hear the message of Barnabas and Saul; but it is the view of this writer that he, like most of the Greeks of his day, just loved to "hear some new thing" (17:21). Regardless of his motivation, he is about to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ.

8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith.

But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation): "Elymas is the interpretation, not of the name Bar-jesus, but of the word rendered 'the sorcerer.' It is an Arabic word, and means the same as ‘Magus' " (Barnes 457) (see notes on verse 6).

withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy: It is obvious that Elymas can see that his infamous career will come to an end and he will be exposed for the fake he really is if the proconsul comes under the influence of Barnabas and Saul. What approach Elymas uses to vilify Barnabas and Saul is uncertain; but it is certain it must have been something of the utmost deceit because Saul accuses him of being "full of all subtilty and all mischief" (verse 10).

from the faith: One may be assured Elymas uses all the lies and corrupt methods that his depraved mind can conceive to keep Paulus from accepting "the faith." But is not that the way it usually is? Anytime there is a chance that someone might be on the verge of becoming a Christian, there is always some "child of the devil" (verse 10) who will do his best to hinder his obedience.
Then Saul, (who also is called Paul:), filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him,

Then Saul, (who also is called Paul): There is much speculation as to the reason Saul begins to use the name Paul at this point in history. Much time and space could be used to examine the various explanations for the name change, but it does not seem practical to do so. Therefore, two reasons will be presented, one simple, the other a bit more fanciful. The reader may take his choice or even choose an explanation of his own.

The apostle to the Gentiles is called by two names. In the history of his life and work among the Jews he is called by his Jewish name Saul; but now that he is beginning his labors among the Roman Gentiles, his Roman name is used from this time on. Luke presents this new name in a remarkable way; the "also" does not mean that the name "Paul" was given now for the first time, but that he had always had it (Boles 202).

And now, from this point of the Apostolical history, Paul appears as the great figure in every picture. Barnabas, henceforward, is always in the background. The great Apostle now enters on his work as the preacher to the Gentiles; and simultaneously with his active occupation of the field in which he was called to labor, his name is suddenly changed. As "Abram" was changed into "Abraham," when God promised that he would be the "father of many nations;" --as "Simon" was changed into "Peter," when it was said, "On this rock I will build my church;"-- so "Saul" is changed into "Paul," at the moment of his first great victory among the Heathen (Conybeare & Howson 135).

filled with the Holy Ghost: This term indicates that the events here recorded are under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Paul's being "filled with the Holy Ghost" is able to detect the dishonest intentions of Elymas, to rebuke him for the imposter that he is, and to pronounce a divine punishment upon him; all by the miraculous power provided by the Holy Spirit.
set his eyes on him: One can only imagine the piercing look that might be produced by one with the character of Paul coupled with the power of the Holy Spirit. It must have been captivating indeed. Elymas must endure this penetrating stare from Paul for an extended period of time because it is the last thing he will see for "a season" (verse 11).

10 And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?

Under the direction of the Holy Spirit, Paul unleashes a rebuke upon Elymas that is truly amazing in its scope. As McGarvey says, Paul perceives here is a man who "was a villain of the deepest dye, fighting against what he knew to be right, and perverting that which he knew to be true" (Vol. II 8). Paul spares no feelings but denounces this man in no uncertain terms.

And said, O full of all subtilty: Paul describes this evil sorcerer as being not just one full of "subtilty" but one "full of ALL subtilty." Vine defines "subtilty" as "guile" (Vol. IV 88). To be "full of guile" indicates one guilty of deceit who knows he is a fraud.

and all mischief: The word rendered "mischief" is used only this one time in the New Testament. Again, Paul does not simply accuse Elymas of being full of mischief but rather "full of ALL mischief." Hervey says the word mischief means, "reckless conduct, villainy, wickedness..." (403).
thou child of the devil: It is the well-known purpose of the devil to oppose the truth and deceive as many as he possibility can. Elymas is attempting to accomplish the same goals as the devil; therefore, Paul rightly refers to him as the offspring of the devil. Satan is here shown to be the father of those practicing deceit and fraud. It should be noted that the modern religious racketeers of the same ilk as Elymas get their impetus from the same source, their father, the devil.

thou enemy of all righteousness: Again, Paul emphasizes that this man is opposed to "all righteousness." Paul has exposed one devoid of any redeeming qualities: he is consumed in guile and villainy.

wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord: Elymas may not realize it, but he is about to have his life of religious villainy curtailed at least "for a season" (verse 11).

11 And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.

And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee: This statement shows the judgment against Elymas is not made by Paul but rather by God Himself.

and thou shalt be blind: The decision of God is that this deceitful opponent of righteousness will be struck blind. This is the only example of a miracle worked by the apostles that brought harm to anyone; and, even at that, the harm is only temporary.

not seeing the sun for a season: How long Elymas remains blind is not known. It surely is enough time for him to meditate upon the power of God in contrast to his fakery and be able to see the difference.
And immediately: Unlike the alleged miracles of today’s miracle workers, the miracles performed by God are "immediate."

there fell on him a mist: Luke’s medical training is evident when he says, "A mist" fell on him. The word rendered "mist" is used only here in the New Testament. "... it is a medical term, very common in Hippocrates, (the father of medicine) to express a darkening and dimming of the eyes by cataract or other disease" (Hervey 403).

and a darkness: As a cloud might darken the sun, so the mist darkens the vision of Elymas.

and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand: This new experience of being blind must have had an humbling effect upon this one who is guilty of leading others into darkness. Now he gropes about for someone to lead him. "The tense of the verb (‘he was seeking’) seems to imply that he sought and did not find help" (Reese 364). Hopefully Elymas’ blindness will help him to see!

Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.

Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed: There is some discussion as to whether Paulus simply "believed" Elymas is an imposter, having been exposed by the Apostle Paul, or whether "believed" indicates he obeys the gospel and becomes a Christian. One would prefer to think that Paulus does believe and does obey the gospel, but Luke does not clearly resolve the question, so we are left in indecision.
being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord: The preaching of the word of God and its confirmation by working a miracle have the desired effects upon Paulus. He now comes into the grip of the gospel of Christ. As stated above, it is unclear whether he obeys. Although Elymas is temporarily suffering for his unrighteous life, even he is given the opportunity to repent.

13 Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem.

Now when Paul and his company: It is apparent that Paul has become the central figure in Luke's record. Barnabas, Mark, and others who may have accompanied Paul are referred to as "his company."

loosed from Paphos: See notes on verse 6.

they came to Perga in Pamphylia: The disciples leave Cyprus and sail in a northwesterly direction, a distance of 170 miles, reaching the coast of Asia Minor at the province of Pamphylia. Pamphylia, in Bible days, was surrounded by Pisidia on the north, Cilicia on the east, Phrygia on the west, and the Mediterranean Sea on the south. Today it would be located in the modern country of Turkey.

Perga" was the capital of Pamphylia, located on the river Cestrus, about seven miles from its mouth... The site is now called by the Turks Eski--Kalesi. It was celebrated for the worship of Artemis (Diana), whose temple stood on a hill outside the town (Unger 844).
and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem: Here is a most interesting statement that surely tweaks the curiosity of Bible scholars. Why does John Mark depart the company of Paul in the midst of this missionary journey? Coffman surmises the reason John leaves is "due to his resentment of Paul's replacing his uncle Barnabas as the leading missionary" (258-259). Howson suggests that John is a coward afraid to face the "perils of robbers" found in the mountains. "As he looked up from Perga to the Gentile mountains, his heart failed him... The lawless and marauding habits of the population of those mountains... were notorious in all parts of ancient history" (Conybeare and Howson 145). Regardless of the motivation for John Mark's abandoning the mission, it is not well received by Paul. Paul refuses to take John Mark on the next journey (15:36-41).

14 But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down.

But when they departed from Perga: Luke makes no mention of any events that may have transpired in Perga; therefore, because of the silence of the scriptures, one is left to wonder what happened there.

eye came to Antioch in Pisidia: Leaving Perga, Paul and company travel north about one hundred miles to Antioch in Pisidia. This is a very dangerous trip because of the hazards of mountain travel and the presence of notorious robbers, but one is left to follow in silence as Luke gives no record of the journey. Antioch in Pisidia is not to be confused with Antioch in Syria.
Antioch in Pisidia, founded by Seleucus I Nicator (312–280 B.C.), was a commercial center commanding the great trade route between Ephesus and the Cilician Gates. ... The ruins of Pisidian Antioch are in the vicinity of the modern Turkish town of Yalovach (Unger 69).

**and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down:** Paul's primary thrust is to take the gospel to the Gentiles, but he never lets any opportunity pass to preach to the Jews. Since the synagogue is the gathering place for the Jews on the sabbath (Saturday, the seventh day), it is here that Paul takes his seat and patiently waits for an opportunity to address the audience. (For additional notes on the "synagogue," see notes on 6:9).

Because Paul often meets in the synagogue on the sabbath, there are those who would try to make him a "Sabbatarian" and bind the seventh day (Saturday) as the appointed day for the assembly of the saints in the New Testament. This is an erroneous conclusion. The "first day of the week" (Sunday) is the appointed day for the assembly of Christians (20:7). Paul met in the synagogue on the sabbath simply because that is where he could find the Jews assembled.

15 And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.

**And after the reading of the law and the prophets:** Luke here provides a brief description of a portion of the services conducted in the synagogue. Reese gives more information in the following description of the order of services in the synagogues (386-387):
1. The recitation of the *Shema*. This was a confession of God's unity consisting of passages from Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 11:13-21, Numbers 15:37-41.

2. Prayers. The most important prayers were the *Shemoneh esreh*, "eighteen eulogies," a cycle of 18 prayers.

3. The reading of the Law and Prophets. After the prayers, the *parasaah*, i.e., the pericope from the Law for that Sabbath, was read, and the interpreter translated verse by verse into Aramaic (or into whatever was the native language of the worshippers).

4. The sermon. After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the sermon followed ...

5. The benediction. After the sermon a benediction was pronounced (by one of the elders or the ruler), and the congregation answered "Amen."

the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on: Here is a ready-made opportunity for the Apostle Paul. He is invited to address the congregation. There is some speculation as to how Paul receives the invitation to speak. Plumptre suggests the "elders apparently saw strangers taking the position of teachers" (83), that is, Paul and Barnabas are sitting in the seats reserved for the Rabbis (teachers); while McGarvey says, "... they took pains, before the service began, to introduce themselves to the rulers, and ask the privilege of addressing the audience ere it should be dismissed" (Vol. II 13).
Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience.

Then Paul stood up: It seems to be customary for the Jews to sit while speaking (Luke 4:20), but Paul evidently prefers the custom of standing to speak as done by the Greeks and Romans (17:22).

and beckoning with his hand said: This statement provides two ideas that are noteworthy. First, it provides evidence that Luke is definitely one of Paul's "company" as he is an eyewitness to this gesture made by Paul. Secondly, the use of this particular hand movement is understood to call for silence and the attention of the audience (12:17; 19:33; 21:40; 26:1).

Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience: Here begins the first recorded sermon of the Apostle Paul. He starts by addressing all those who are gathered in the synagogue. "Men of Israel" refers to the devout Jews while "ye that fear God" is in reference to those "of heathen origin, and had not become proselytes in the full sense of the term, but were known as the so-called ‘proselytes of the gate’“ (Plumptre 83). The details of Paul's sermon will continue through verse 41.

17 The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an high arm brought he them out of it.

The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers: The Jews loved to hear their history recited, especially how God chose them as a peculiar people and favored them through the years of their glory (Deuteronomy 7:6-7). Paul begins his sermon in this way not only to gain the favorable attention of his audience but also to lay the foundation for preaching Jesus to
them. The phrase "chose our fathers" has reference to the calling of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to be the forefathers of Israel (see notes on 7:8).

Here is an amazing circumstance: Paul begins his sermon by following the same basic outline as used by Stephen in chapter seven. One must wonder if the words Paul now preaches must have struck some tender chords on his own heart as the haunting words of Stephen are recalled by the very one who guarded the clothes of those who stoned Stephen to death (7:58).

**and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt:** Even while slaves to Egypt, the people of Israel enjoyed the blessings of God. Stephen says, they "grew and multiplied" (7:17). God never forgot his people but rather in due time delivered them from Egypt.

**and with an high arm brought he them out of it:** Barnes supplies the following comments on “with an high arm”:

The expression "an high arm" denotes great power. The arm denotes strength, as that by which we perform anything. A high arm, an arm lifted up, or stretched out, denotes that strength exerted to the utmost. The children of Israel are represented as having been delivered with an outstretched arm, (Deuteronomy 26:8; Exodus 6:6;)(Barnes 459).
18 And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness.

**And about the time of forty years:** The "forty years" is a reference to the time the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness (Exodus 16:35).

**suffered he their manners in the wilderness:** There is some discussion concerning the meaning of the word “suffered” as to whether Paul is saying that God "tolerated" the manners of Israel (their murmuring and rebellion) or if it means that God "nursed" or "sustained" them. The reason for the discussion lies in the fact that "some manuscripts read ‘to bear with’ (etropophoresin) rather than ‘he sustained, or nourished’ (etrophophoresin)” (Reese 368). In the context of Paul's sermon, he is emphasizing the patience and care of God; therefore, the preferable translation is that God cared for Israel as a nursing father would bear his child.

19 And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Chanaan, he divided their land to them by lot.

**And when he had destroyed seven nations:** In the conquest of the land of Canaan, God gives Israel victories over "seven nations greater and mightier" than they are (Deuteronomy 7:1). The seven nations that fall before Israel are the Hittites, the Gergashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

**in the land of Chanaan:** The land of Canaan is the name given to the entire area known to Israel as the "promised land."

**he divided their land to them by lot:** Upon subduing the inhabitants of the land of Canaan, the Israelites received their inheritance. Because of the care of a benevolent God, the dream of Israel, the promised land, has been realized.
20 And after that he gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet.

There is much discussion on the exact chronology of the events here listed. The difficulty arises in the attempt to determine the exact period of Jewish history that is covered. The King James Version indicates this “four hundred fifty years” is the time the various judges ruled Israel. If this is the case, it should be understood that the rule of some of these judges is contemporaneous. Other versions, such as the American Standard Version, place the phrase “four hundred fifty years” in verse 19, thus designating this as the time of the wandering in the wilderness, the conquest of Canaan, and the distribution of the land during the rule of the judges. Regardless of the time period here intended, one can rest assured that Paul makes no mistake about his chronology. Also, there seems to have been no problem in his calculations for this audience of Jews who surely would have recognized any discrepancy. In reality the only problem is for us to determine when the “four hundred and fifty years” of Jewish history begins and ends.

21 And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years.

And afterward they desired a king: Samuel was the last judge over Israel. When he was old, the people of Israel demanded that he "give them a king" as other nations had (1 Samuel 8:4-7). This was not a rejection of Samuel but rather a rejection of God's rule over them (1 Samuel 8:7).
and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin: Saul becomes the first king over the people of Israel (1 Samuel 9). The history of Saul as king is a calamity to say the least. He started out very well but ended his reign in disgrace, having to be removed by God.

by the space of forty years: The duration of Saul's reign is not given in the Old Testament. Paul must have gained this knowledge from the inspiration by which he writes.

22 And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will.

And when he had removed him: Because of King Saul's disobedience to the commands of God to "utterly destroy" the Amalekites, he is "removed" as king of Israel (1 Samuel 15:6-26).

he raised up unto them David to be their king: David is chosen to replace Saul. The record telling how David is selected is found in 1 Samuel 16.

to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will: Samuel told Saul God would choose "a man after His own heart" to be king over Israel (1 Samuel 13:14). In view of the life David lived, it is obvious he committed grievous sins in the eyes of God. In particular, he committed adultery with Bathsheba and eventually murdered her husband, the faithful soldier Uriah (2 Samuel 11:1-27). When convicted of his sins, David was quick to acknowledge them, to repent, and to seek God's forgiveness. He was a "man after God's own heart" in the fact that he worked to maintain his relationship with God, he opposed idolatry, and he worked for universal obedience to God among the people of Israel.
23 Of this man's seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus:

Of this man's seed: Upon the mention of David, who is a very popular character to the Jews, Paul now quickly and skillfully introduces Jesus, "the Son of David" (Matthew 1:1).

hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus: Paul has arrived at the purpose of his sermon, to present Jesus, the Son of David, as the promised Messiah. Paul will now begin a systematic proof of the Messiahship of Jesus. The following points will be presented as evidence:

1. The testimony of John the Baptist (24,25).
2. The prophecies fulfilled in the death of Jesus (26-29).
3. The resurrection of Jesus (30-37).

24 When John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.

When John had first preached before his coming: John preached a message of preparation for the Savior. Paul here reminds these Jews of John's being the forerunner of the Messiah, one who was to "make his paths straight" (Matthew 3:3).

the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel: John's "baptism of repentance" was to prepare a people to receive Jesus the Messiah (Matthew 3:11). The teaching of John is very much abbreviated here, but it is certain that Paul's audience is acquainted with John's message. No Jew could have attended one of the many religious feast days in Jerusalem without having heard of John; therefore, there is no need to elaborate.
25 And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not he. But, behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of his feet I am not worthy to loose.

And as John fulfilled his course: John had a special mission to fulfill: to the very end of his ministry, he declares the One who would come after him, Jesus.

he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not he. But, behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of his feet I am not worthy to loose: It seems there were some who would have received John as the Messiah. John, in order to avoid this misdirection of attention, declares, "I am not he." "I am not worthy to loose" the sandals of the "ONE" who "cometh after me!" Who could John have been referring to other than Jesus, the Savior?

In his first point to show Jesus as Savior, Paul has used the testimony of John. One can only guess at the reception of his audience, but doubtless there are those who see the truth of Paul's words. This conclusion seems evident in the following verse.

26 Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent.

This verse seems to indicate a brief break in Paul's sermon. At this point Paul again calls for the attention of the assembly as he does in verse 16. Paul, being the masterful teacher he is, perhaps recognizes in his audience a lack of attention or perhaps some other distraction; he feels the need to stress the urgency of his message: "The word of this salvation is sent to you."
27 For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him.

Paul now begins his second proof of Jesus as the Messiah, the evidence provided by the prophecies that are fulfilled by the death of Jesus.

For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not: As tactfully as possible, Paul lays the responsibility of the death of Jesus upon "they that dwell at Jerusalem and their rulers." He gives the possible explanation as "because they knew him not." Peter says, "... through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers" (3:17).

nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day: Here Paul cites the reason the Jews do not know Jesus. They do not receive Jesus as the Messiah because of an ignorance of their own prophets. In the Old Testament, there is a multiplicity of prophecies that reveal such detailed information on the coming Messiah that anyone with knowledge of these prophecies should have had no problem in recognizing Jesus. Paul surely must have had pangs of conscience when he makes this accusation of ignorance against his Jewish brethren because he himself was a student of the Law, yet he also failed to recognize Jesus as Messiah. Sadly, the same scenario is being repeated today. Because of a lack of knowledge of God's word, in this case the New Testament, the majority of the world is going to miss Jesus again!

they have fulfilled them in condemning him: The very prophecies fulfilled by the Jews in the condemnation of Jesus prove His Messiahship. For an example of one of these prophecies, read Isaiah 53.
28 And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain.

And though they found no cause of death in him: Paul continues to build his case for Jesus as Messiah by pointing out that Jesus committed no crime, yet he was put to death.

yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain: It should be remembered that the Jews themselves can put no one to death: they need the consent of the Roman governor. Pilate is very reluctant to pronounce the death sentence upon Jesus "for he knew that for envy they had delivered him" (Matthew 27:18). Upon the demands of the Jews, "let him be crucified," Pilate "delivered him to be crucified" (Matthew 27:26; Luke 23:14-24).

29 And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre.

And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him: When Jesus dies upon the cross, the prophecies of the death of the Messiah have been fulfilled. The Jews should have recognized Jesus as Messiah in the fulfillment of these predictions.

they took him down from the tree: The details of the crucifixion are summarized by Paul with this statement. It is apparent that Paul knows his audience is aware of the proceedings in the death of Jesus. "The apostolic preachers stressed the offense of the cross, 'Cursed is everyone that is hanged on a tree' (Deut. 21:23; Gal. 3:13)" (Coffman 264). (See 5:30 for additional notes on "tree.")
and laid him in a sepulchre: "They ... laid him in a sepulchre." The pronoun "they" refers to "they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers" in verse 27. It seems that both the enemies of Jesus and his friends (Joseph and Nicodemus who actually claimed the body of Jesus and laid it in the tomb) are considered together as players in the "fulfillment of all things" (Matthew 27:59-60; John 19:38-39).

30 But God raised him from the dead:

Man crucified Jesus, but "God raised him from the dead." The preaching of the glorious resurrection of Jesus is the very heart of Christianity (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Paul, at this verse, begins his third proof of Jesus as Messiah by presenting the resurrection of Jesus from the dead (see notes on 2:23-24).

31 And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people.

Paul begins his affirmation of the resurrection of Jesus by the mention of eyewitnesses. Luke says, "... he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days" (1:3). Later Paul records, "... he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto the present" (1 Corinthians 15:6).

It was the absolute certainty of the first-century Christians that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead which motivated the apostolic preachers and gave the faith of our Lord Jesus a sweeping victory throughout the world of that era (Coffman 264).
32 And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers,

It is with joy that Paul declares the good news. The promise of a Savior who was made known to "the fathers" is now made a reality to them.

33 God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.

God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children: The promise of a Savior through the lineage of David is now fulfilled by Jesus.

in that he hath raised up Jesus again: Paul has now shown that Jesus is the promised Messiah not only by the predictions of the Old Testament but also by the fact that God raised him from the dead, a fact confirmed by many eyewitnesses.

as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee: One would ordinarily conclude that "this day" is a reference to the day of birth of the person under consideration, but here the reference is to the day of His resurrection (Romans 1:4). This same recognition of Jesus as the "Son of God" has occurred on other occasions. At the time of the baptism of Jesus, the voice of God rang out of heaven with the declaration, "this is my beloved son..." (Matthew 3:17).
34 And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to
corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David.

And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to
corruption: Jesus truly is the Savior who "ever lives," having broken the power of death
forever: "Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Corinthians 15:54). Unlike the death and
resurrection of Lazarus, or of the Shunammite's son, or Jairus' daughter, the death and
resurrection of Jesus is a final victory over death; "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no
more; death hath no more dominion over Him" (Romans 6:9). Through the resurrection of
Jesus, His faithful followers of today can thank God that the sting of death has been removed
and the "victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" is realized (1 Corinthians 15:54-58).

he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David: This passage is a
quotation from Isaiah 55:3.

What were the “sure mercies of David" but the “everlasting covenant” of mercy, which
was to find fulfillment in One who should be "a leader and commander to the people?"
We may well believe the few words quoted recalls to St. Paul and to his hearers the
whole of that wonderful chapter which opens with "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye
to the waters" (Plumptre 85).

35 Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to
see corruption.

Wherefore he saith also in another psalm: The "other psalm" is in reference to Psalm 16.
Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption: Here is another example of an Old Testament prophecy foretelling the resurrection of Jesus. Only a resurrection from the dead could prevent the corruption of one in the grave.

36 For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption:

This is the same line of reasoning used by the Apostle Peter in his sermon on Pentecost. The logic is since David died and "saw corruption," the promise was not to David but to "the son of David," Jesus Christ (see notes on 2:27-30).

37 But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption.

This verse is a reiteration of Paul's strong point: Jesus has to be the promised Messiah because God raises Him from the dead. His body "saw no corruption."

38 Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins:

Having clinched his argument that Jesus is truly the Savior of the world, Paul now "offers the invitation." The purpose of Jesus' being born on earth is to "save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

It is a sad commentary on modern religion that the pulpit has become a soapbox for politics, a crying towel for the social gospel, and a platform for religious racketeers to fleece the willingly ignorant of their money. The singular purpose of the Lord's church is to present Jesus as the only hope for a lost and dying world.
39 And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.

**And by him all that believe are justified from all things:** Because of the misconceptions of the denominational world, it is necessary to clarify how one is "justified" by believing. James makes it clear one is not "justified" by believing only or "faith only."

Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only (James 2:24).

To be "justified" by believing in Jesus involves obedience to all the commands that are taught as being necessary for salvation. Faith is the motivating factor in salvation. Today one must allow his faith in Jesus to motivate him to obey the necessary steps to salvation. Everyone who believes in Jesus (John 8:24), repents of past sins (Luke 13:3), confesses Jesus as the Son of God (Matthew 10:32), and is baptized in water (8:36-39) will receive the "remission of sins" (2:38), which one can receive in no other way. (See 10:43 for more extensive notes.)

"Justified means to be regarded and treated as if they are 'not guilty'. They are pardoned and admitted to the favor of God and treated as if they had not offended" (Reese 376). "All things" has reference not only to the guilt of sin but also to the everlasting penalty of sin, which can be avoided by those who believe.

**from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses:** This statement surely is a shock to the thinking of this Jewish audience. They have trusted in the teachings of Moses all of their lives, and now they find out that their salvation is dependent not upon the sacrifice of bulls and goats, whose blood could never take away sins; but their salvation is entirely dependent upon the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 10:1-4).
40 Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets;

After proving Jesus as the Messiah by the testimony of John, by the fulfillment of prophecy by the life and death of Jesus, and through His resurrection, Paul must have perceived the resentment and dissatisfaction of his audience; therefore, he reminds them of the following prophecy.

41 Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.

This quotation is taken from Habakkuk 1:5 and is intended to warn the audience not to reject the precepts of the gospel automatically just because they are a new and startling concept. "The words, ‘though one should declare it unto you,’ imply that the declaration of it would contain such evidence as would make the rejection of it inexcusable" (McGarvey, Vol. II 26). The doctrine of atonement, based upon the punishment of the innocent for the guilty, from a human standpoint is a difficult concept to believe; yet this is the glorious truth upon which man's salvation hinges. To reject this truth is to perish.

42 And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath.

And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue: There is some discussion on this verse as to which "Jews" left the synagogue first. If one stays strictly with the King James text, the indication is that a portion of the Jews, perhaps the leaders in the synagogue, reject the teaching of Paul and without hesitation leave the assembly. Other manuscripts render "And as they went out" for "when the Jews were gone." Hervey says, "... they means Paul and Barnabas, who went out of the synagogue before the formal dismissal of the congregation;
and, as they were going out, received an invitation to repeat their instruction on the next sabbath" (408).

the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath:
Regardless of who left the assembly first, a portion of Paul's audience is interested enough in his message to request more information on the next sabbath.

43 Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.

Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: When the assembly "was broken up," some of the Jews and those devout Gentiles whom Paul has addressed twice in his sermon as "ye that fear God" (16,26) follow after the disciples to hear more of their word.

who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God: The content of the disciple's continuing message to these people is not given, but one can rest assured this audience is further persuaded of the validity of Jesus as Savior. The fervent interest shown by this crowd is encouraged with the words "to continue in the grace of God," "an expression which means only that God regarded them with favor, as he does all earnest seekers after truth; and should they continue in it, as the apostles exhorted them, they would soon attain to the remission of sins which he had offered in Christ" (McGarvey, Vol. II 27).
44 And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.

And the next sabbath day: One week from the initial sermon, Paul and Barnabas again make their way to the synagogue to be met by an overwhelming crowd.

came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God: The indication is that the major portion of the population of the city, both Jews and Gentiles, gather in and about the synagogue to hear the "word of God" from these preachers.

Any time the "word of God" enjoys such attention as witnessed here, one can rest assured that Satan, the adversary, is at work to muster his forces in opposition. He is ready to "take away the word" lest it find root in some good heart (Mark 4:15).

45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.

But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy: These Jews have never seen a crowd of this size at the synagogue. This is certainly a blow to their egos. They are used to being the ones who are the dispensers of truth in this city; therefore, they are filled with jealousy at the popularity of these new preachers.

And spake against those things which were spoken by Paul: It must be assumed that Paul and Barnabas continue the theme of the discourse delivered on the first sabbath. They continue to affirm the salvation that can be found only in Christ. One can understand the fierce passion that is stirred up in the Jewish heart by this message. The Jews can see their own religion being superseded by the doctrine of Christ.
contradicting and blaspheming: These indignant Jews do not hesitate to contradict the teaching of Paul and evidently enter into "blasphemy" ("To rail at or revile." Vine, Vol. I 131). Judging from the reaction of Paul and Barnabas, this blasphemy is aimed not only at them but also against the Lord Jesus Christ.

46 Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.

Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold: It is now time for Paul and Barnabas to wax indignant. In the face of this blasphemous attack, the disciples seem to realize the futility of trying to convince these Jews about Jesus; therefore, they are ready to turn their efforts to a more receptive audience, the Gentiles.

and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: It is the plan of God that the gospel should be offered to the "Jew first" and then to "the Greek" (Romans 1:16).

but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life: It is obvious to Paul that these Jews have rejected the word of God; thus, they have counted themselves "unworthy of everlasting life."

lo, we turn to the Gentiles: These are indeed bold words to speak in a synagogue. The disciples could have said nothing that would incite the Jews more than to say that salvation is now to be offered to these uncircumcised Gentiles! The Jewish mind-set has always been that salvation is reserved for the Jewish nation only.
47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.

This is a partial quote from Isaiah 49:6. The entire verse is rendered below to further demonstrate how ignorant the Jews are of their own prophets. It is truly amazing to see the clarity with which this Old Testament scripture plainly teaches it is "too small a thing" to limit salvation to Israel only, but His Servant Messiah, Jesus, would also be a "light to the Gentiles."

And he said, It is too small a thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad: One cannot imagine the joy of these Gentiles, who have always been treated as second class human beings by the Jews, to realize they are now equal in the sight of God (Acts 10:34-35; Romans 9:25; 1 Corinthians 12:13).

and glorified the word of the Lord: In contrast to the Jews’ contradicting and blaspheming the word of God, the Gentiles delight in the new and glorious truths just revealed, including them in eternal salvation.
and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed: Herein is an amazing concept. God had a plan in his mind for the salvation of fallen man even before the world was founded. God foreordained (appointed) that those who would listen to and obey His word, thus submitting their will to His will, would receive "eternal life." Here Paul tells us that those Gentiles who had receptive minds and submissive spirits "believed." Perhaps the clearer understanding of "ordained" is as Plumptre says, "as many as were disposed for" (87).

There is no evidence in this verse or any other verse to indicate the doctrine of predestination or election as espoused by Calvin and embraced by many in the denominational world. This false doctrine of predestination holds that certain ones are preordained (elected) to salvation while others are irrevocably preordained to be lost eternally. This doctrine, if true, would eliminate the need to preach the gospel as those who are ordained to be saved would be saved while those ordained to be lost would be lost and neither group could change their eternal destiny!

The inescapable conclusion to this false doctrine is that those who are lost would be lost due to no fault of their own; but because God did not "ordain" (elect) them to salvation, it would be God's will that they be lost! Dear reader, you need not lose any sleep over such a heresy. There is no specificity in God's plan in respect to individuals. It is God's ordained plan to save ALL those who will believe and obey His word (Matthew 7:21; Titus 2:11; Hebrews 5:8-9; 1 John 2:3-4).
49 And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.

Although the Jews reject the gospel, a great many of the Gentiles receive it. The Revised Standard Version renders the word "published" as "spread abroad."

The Apostle Paul was never content to preach the word only in the city visited but the whole region or province in which the city was situated was to hear the word also, and so it was here in Pisidia, as it will be in Asia and other places “the word of the Lord spread abroad throughout the region” (De Welt 184).

50 But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts.

But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women: These are the women of high estate, most likely proselytes to the Jewish religion, who are connected with the ranking families of the city. They, being the elite of the social and political order, are less inclined to be interested in Paul's message than those of a more meager estate. It is entirely possible that the Jews use these "honourable women" to influence the "chief men of the city" who are their husbands.

and the chief men of the city: The chief men are the counter parts of these "honourable women." As is suggested above, it may have been that these men are taking orders from their wives when they mount a general persecution against Paul and Barnabas.
and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts: The Jews of Antioch of Pisidia will no longer suffer the preaching of Jesus; they are finally able to muster the assistance of the general population to oust Paul and Barnabas from their borders.

51 But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium. But they shook off the dust of their feet against them: This symbolic demonstration by the departing apostles is not intended as merely a sign of contempt, nor is it a childish display of resentment. This symbolic shaking "off the dust of their feet" is designed as a solemn "testimony against them." The rejection of God's chosen messengers is a rejection of God Himself, which will have everlasting consequences.

And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city (Mark 6:11).

and came unto Iconium: The apostles travel about sixty miles southeast of Antioch of Pisidia to the city of Iconium. (For more details on Iconium, see 14:1).

52 And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost. And the disciples were filled with joy: Luke gives one last backward look at the new Christians in Antioch; they "were filled with joy." The reception of the good news of Jesus Christ always produces joy in the hearts of men (8:8; 8:39). Until a man gets his life right in God's sight, he can never experience true joy.
and with the Holy Ghost: The concept of being “filled with the Holy Ghost,” is not new. It assuredly can be understood that these new disciples receive the "gift of the Holy Spirit" when they obey the gospel and are baptized "for the remission of" sins (2:38). This promise of God's indwelling Spirit is made to all Christians (2:38-39); but it can also be implied that certain ones also receive miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit by the laying on of the apostles' hands. The exact meaning of this phrase can sometimes be determined by the context. (See 8:15-17 for more extensive notes.) These miraculous abilities were necessary for the furtherance of the church until the New Testament was confirmed and written down.

Christianity is on the march! In spite of the stringent opposition of the Jews, a persecution Paul would later recall in 2 Timothy 3:11, the word of the Lord has made its mark in Antioch. Paul and Barnabas leave in this hostile city a band of joyful believers who now constitute the church of Christ in Antioch of Pisidia!
This chapter marks the conclusion of Paul's first missionary journey. The trip has not been without hardships; but, as will be seen in this chapter, for Paul the worst is yet to come.

The length of time Paul and company had spent in Antioch of Pisidia included at least 'the whole winter of A.D. 46-47...' Scholars are uncertain as to the exact duration of Paul's labors at any given place on this first tour, and also as to the time of the whole tour, their educated guesses ranging from one to three years. All that is certainly known is that it took place in the period A.D. 45-50. Certainly Paul stayed long enough in Pisidian Antioch to teach and firmly establish the church there (Coffman 271).

1 And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed.

And it came to pass in Iconium: Undaunted by their hostile reception in Antioch, these good soldiers of the cross press on searching for the "good ground" (Mark 4:8).

Driven out of Antioch by the persecution of the Jews, they went on sixty miles eastward to Iconium, a large city, still in existence as Konieh, and in the Middle Ages the capital of a powerful Mohammedan kingdom. This region, in the apostle's time, was independent of the Roman Empire (Hurlbut 115).
that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews: Once again, Paul and Barnabas take advantage of the audience of both Jews and Gentiles who have gathered at the synagogue.

and so spake: It can be easily determined from previous examples of the preaching of Paul and Barnabas that the theme of the message is Jesus Christ as Messiah and Saviour, but the intensity and passion with which these men "so spake" can only be imagined. The end result is, "so then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). As a result, "a great multitude ... believed."

It should be remembered by all who would be preachers that the purpose of preaching is not merely to preach but to "so" preach that sinners are convicted of their sins and the saved are encouraged to strive onward and upward for the "prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14).

that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks: This stirring message delivered by the disciples has telling results upon the audience. Many, both Jews and Greeks (Gentiles--in this case most likely Greek proselytes), are led to obedience.

believed: The fact that Luke mentions only that these "believed" does not imply the false doctrine of salvation by "faith only," nor does it preclude the necessity of obedience to the steps of repentance, confession, and baptism as the scriptures require for salvation (Luke 13:3; Matthew 10:32; Mark 16:16). "Wherever such an expression is used in the NT, 'believed' is a figure of speech standing for all that is involved in becoming a Christian" (Coffman 273). (For a more complete commentary on salvation by faith, see notes on 10:43.)
2 But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren.

But the unbelieving Jews: There are those in Paul's audience who are blinded by Jewish prejudice against Jesus; these steadfastly resist obedience to the gospel. Boles says:

The Jews who disbelieved were the "disobedient" Jews who "stirred up the souls of the Gentiles" against Paul and Barnabus. To disbelieve is to disobey, and to believe usually means to obey. "Disobedient" comes from the Greek "apeithesantes," and means "to be unwilling to be persuaded," or to withhold belief, and then also to withhold obedience; they refused to allow themselves to be persuaded by the truth preached by Paul and Barnabas. They used their influence on the Gentiles against Paul and Barnabas; through these disbelieving and disobedient Jews the Gentiles were disposed not to hear the gospel, but to help persecute the preachers of the gospel (220).

This attitude is seen among many so-called religious people of today. They will not yield to the truth; and, worse yet, they do all that is possible to hinder those who might obey the truth. Nothing has changed since the first century when Jesus described the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees thusly:

But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in (Matthew 23:13).
stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren: These rabble-rousing Jews excite the minds of the Gentiles to do evil to the disciples. It is usually an easy task to get simple-minded humans to attack something or someone they do not understand.

3 Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

Long time therefore abode they: The term "long time" is a relative statement. It is uncertain if this statement refers to a week, a month, six months; a guess would be that this "long time" is over a period of two or three months.

speaking boldly in the Lord: Without fear and in the very face of their opposition, these two men of God "boldly" preach the gospel.

which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands: Jesus promises to "confirm the word with signs following" (Mark 16:20). This confirmation is being done here at Iconium; Paul and Barnabus are preaching the word and confirming that this word must have come from God by performing wonders of which only God is capable. The very purpose of miracles is to confirm the word. When the word is completely written down and confirmed, the purpose for miracles ceases (1 Corinthians 13:8-10). (For more information on the purpose of miracles, see notes on 2:17 and 4:30.)
4 But the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles.

Anywhere the gospel is preached, it produces a division. The division in which one finds himself depends on whether the word is accepted or rejected. The gospel divides saints from sinners, the righteous from the unrighteous, the lost from the saved. Jesus says, "I have not come to send peace but a sword" (Matthew 10:34) and "the father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter..." (Luke 12:53).

This is a good place to make a comment about the use of the term "apostle." This is the first time the title of "apostle" is used to refer to Paul. Here both Paul and Barnabas are called "apostles," but it should be understood that only Paul is an apostle in the same sense as were the twelve original apostles. Although he does not meet the requirements as stated by Peter to be one of the original twelve ("having companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us" Acts 1:21-22), Paul is commissioned directly by the Lord Jesus Himself to carry the gospel to the Gentiles. Barnabas is an apostle in the secondary sense of the word, that being "one sent forth" (Vine, Vol. I 63). The term "apostle" may be used for anyone who would be considered as a missionary or a messenger.

Paul used the word and applied it to James the Lord's brother (Gal. 1:19); to Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25) as messenger of the church in Philippi; to Silvanus and Timothy (1 Thess. 2:6; Acts 18:5); and to Andronicus and Junias (Rom. 16:6,7). He even calls the Judaizing teachers "false apostles." (2 Cor. 11:13) (Boles 221).
5 And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use them despitefully, and to stone them,

And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers: The bold effort of the apostles to preach the gospel has the city in a turmoil. Iconium is divided in its reception to these two preachers. McGarvey says:

Here, as in Antioch, the Jews dared not use violence toward the preachers, for fear that they would themselves suffer as disturbers of the peace; so they worked through others until they gained the cooperation of the city rulers... As in all such cases, although the multitude of the city was divided, the party for truth and right were less active than the party for injustice; and, because they were for the right, they were not willing to use violence (Vol. II 38).

to use them despitefully: The Jews are not satisfied just to stone the disciples. They want to further abuse them with wanton insults and outrage. Paul will later use the word, “injurious” derived from this same word (despitefully) to describe his own conduct as a persecutor of the Lord's people (1 Timothy 1:13).

and to stone them: This brutal and inexact science of putting one to death is the chosen method of the Jews.
6 They were ware of it, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about:

They were ware of it: As this unruly mob begins to boil and clamor for the blood of Paul and Barnabas, they are made aware of the impending plot. Before the plan to have the disciples stoned can be executed, they are able to escape toward the wild and desolate country to the southeast.

and fled unto Lystra: The exact location of the city of Lystra is debatable. Most scholars believe it was about eighteen miles south of Iconium.

and Derbe: As is the case with Lystra, the exact location of Derbe is unknown. It is generally accepted that Derbe was about twenty miles to the east of Lystra. This is the farthest point reached by the apostles on this first journey.

cities of Lycaonia: For the reader to appreciate fully the circumstances in which the apostles find themselves, information on the geography and character of the country will be useful. Lycaonia is one of the provinces of Asia Minor, an area often referred to as a part of the region of Galatia. The very name Lycaonia interpreted traditionally as Wolf-land (the local legend derived it from Lycaon who had been transformed into a wolf) represented but too faithfully the character of the inhabitants" (Plumptre 89).

The district of Lycaonia extends from the ridges of Mount Taurus and the borders of Cilicia, on the south, to the Cappadocian hills, on the north. It is a bare and dreary region, unwatered by streams, though in parts liable to occasional inundations. ...In this respect there must be a close resemblance between this country and large tracts of Australia (Conybeare and Howson 165).
This wild and uncivilized country is inhabited by an equally wild and mostly uncivilized people. The chief benefit of the land is pasture for vast herds of sheep, which produce a large trade in wool.

and unto the region that lieth round about: There is no mention of a synagogue in either of these cities, probably because of the small population of Jews in the area; therefore, the apostles take advantage of any opportunity to gather a crowd. The gospel is preached "round about" the area. It is likely such preaching included the nomadic tribes who are constantly on the move with their herds of sheep.

7 And there they preached the gospel.

It would be easy to be discouraged by such people as those who lived in this area. For the most part they are a wild, uneducated, barbaric group of heathens, dominated by idolatry and superstitions (note verses 13 and 14); but here are souls lost in sin. They need a Savior, and Paul and Barnabas are ready to tell them the good news regardless of personal risk. The lesson is there for us today.

8 And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked:

This "certain man" provides an ideal opportunity for Paul to confirm the gospel that he preaches is from the God of heaven by demonstrating God's power to heal. So there will be no mistake about the miracle, this man is chosen.

1. He is "impotent in his feet." Literally, he is without strength in his feet.
2. He is a "cripple from his mother's womb."
3. He has "never walked." It is a well-known fact that this man has never walked.

9 The same heard Paul speak: who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed,

The same heard Paul speak: This poor cripple has the good fortune to hear Paul preach.

who stedfastly beholding him: The intense look that has become a trademark of the Apostle Paul now falls upon this man. This piercing look is used by Paul to separate individuals from the crowd for special attention. This special attention from Paul is sometimes the prelude to a blessing, as is the case here; but this look from Paul can also signal a scathing rebuke that can strip men of their pretense and leave them quaking in their sins (see notes on 13:9).

and perceiving that he had faith to be healed: Paul understands this man not only hears his preaching but he believes. It should be noted that the phrase, "faith to be healed" simply means this cripple believes Paul can heal him. When one of our modern day "faith healers" fails to heal, the excuse is the one being healed does not have enough faith. It should always be remembered that the one being healed does not have to have the faith; rather the one doing the healing is the one required to have faith (see notes on 3:16; 4:30).

10 Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked.

Said with a loud voice: With a "loud voice," Paul rivets the attention of the crowd upon the crippled man.
Stand upright on thy feet: Paul gives a command that must have been amazing to all concerned. This man, crippled from birth, is about to experience the answer to his prayers. He is ordered to "stand!"

And he leaped and walked: The joy of his healing is obvious. The man "leaps and walks." This miracle, performed by God, is instantaneous: the man is healed (see notes on 3:8)!

11 And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men.

And when the people saw what Paul had done: It takes a few minutes for the meaning of this situation to sink into the minds of this stunned audience. When they finally regain their composure, they draw an amazing conclusion.

they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia: What this language of the "Lycaonia" is has much perplexed commentators. It seems evident the apostles do not understand the dialect and do not realize what the people have in mind until they see the preparation being made to make a sacrifice. Vincent gives the following explanation:

The apostles had been conversing with them in Greek. The fact that the people now spoke in their native tongue explains why Paul and Barnabas did not interfere until they saw the preparations for sacrifice. They did not understand what was being said by the people about their divine character. It was natural that the surprise of the Lystrans should express itself in their own language rather than in a foreign tongue (520).
12 And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker.

And they called Barnabas, Jupiter: Unger provides the following information on the Greek god Jupiter: "Jupiter, the Latin form of Greek, Zeus. In the Italian mythology Jupiter was the highest god in heaven, and identical with the Greek god Zeus... " (415).

and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker: "Mercurius" or Mercury, as he was known by the Romans, was called Hermes by the Greeks. Mercurius was, among other things, the messenger or spokesman of the gods. Bruce gives the following summation:

Zeus was the chief god in the Greek pantheon; Hermes, son of Zeus by Maia, was the herald of the gods. Barnabas may have been identified with Zeus because of his more dignified bearing; Paul, the more animated of the two, was called Hermes "because he was the chief speaker..." (292).

13 Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people.

Then the priest of Jupiter: The chief leader in the idolatrous worship of Jupiter wastes no time in stepping up to share in the benefits of the miracle just performed by Paul.

which was before their city: This phrase has reference to the temple or image of Jupiter, located just outside of the gate to the city.
Ancient cities were supposed to be under the protection of particular gods; and their image or temple for their worship was placed commonly at a conspicuous place at the entrance to the city (Reese 394).

*brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people:* Paul and Barnabas are about to become the objects of the worship of these heathen. The idolators make their way to them, leading "bulls," for each of the "gods."

The "bulls" horns are festooned with "garlands" "commonly made of white wool, sometimes interwoven with leaves and flowers. "The sacrifice is accomplished by "cutting the throats of the oxen, catching the blood in a patera, or deep dish, and pouring the blood on the alter" (Plumptre 90).

14 Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out,

Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of: As noted above (verse 11), because of the strange dialect used by these people, it is a few minutes before the disciples understand the intentions of the crowd.

they rent their clothes: To "rent" or rend (tear) one's clothing is a sign often used by the Jews to indicate grief. Paul here grieves that these people would worship him as a god (see Genesis 37:29-34; 2 Samuel 3:31; 2 Kings 5:7; Matthew 26:65).

and ran in among the people, crying out: The apostles are trying get this pagan ceremony, that is about to take place, stopped. They are running about shouting for the attention of the multitude.
15 And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein:

And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you:

Paul explains to the crowd that there is no purpose for this effort to worship them because they are not gods, only men.

and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities: Paul identifies the pomp and pageantry of the intended sacrifice as "vanities." "The words ‘vainy’ and 'vain' were almost the invariable terms used by Jews to describe the emptiness and worthlessness of heathen worship (Ephesians 4:17; 1 Peter 1:18)” (Plumptre 91). Paul explains the reason for his being there is to preach unto them that they might know the "living God."

unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: Paul attempts to focus the mind of his audience away from their dumb and dead idols to the "living God." Until man learns of the "living God," he is reduced to worshiping the creation rather than the Creator.

Here is the initial pattern for preaching the gospel to pagans. Paul starts at the beginning (Genesis 1:1). This pagan audience with little or no knowledge of the word of God is soon to be introduced to the living God, creator of "heaven and earth and all things therein." What a stark contrast between the God who created the heavens and the earth, and the gods these pagans worship! On the one hand is the God who created all things, and on the other hand the gods who have been made by men!
16 Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.

Before the coming of Christ and the introduction of salvation through obedience to the New Testament, God allows the Gentiles to go their "own way" while He gives the Jews a stringent set of written laws to keep. One might speculate as to the Divine reasoning behind this arrangement, but it seems to have been to demonstrate to both Jews and Gentiles that they could not rise to the state of righteousness that God desired by their own merit. The ignorance of the heathen Gentile world is allowed to run its course; the law of Moses is allowed to do its incomplete work among the Jews; and now God provides the means of complete salvation through the death of his only begotten Son. Ignorance is no longer "winked" at by God; now one must hear the gospel and be saved by it (see notes on 17:30).

17 Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.

**Nevertheless he left not himself without witness:** Although God does not give the Gentiles a written confirmation of "Himself," yet He is not without witnesses. The creation stands in stark testimony to the existence of a Creator. As the Psalmist declared:

> The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork (Psalms 19:1).

Paul goes into greater detail to explain this concept in Romans 1:19-25.
in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness: The goodness of God is revealed in his benevolence toward man. God has not forgotten his promise; He causes rain to fall from heaven that man might have "seedtime and harvest."

While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease (Genesis 8:22).

Man, on the other hand, is sometimes like the hog out in the woods; he enjoys the benefits of the acorns, yet he never looks up to see their source. When one "fills his heart with food and gladness," he should never forget to thank his heavenly Benefactor for the blessings of life.

18 And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them.

Even in view of the arguments presented by the apostles, some of the people of Lystra seem to be determined to honor Paul and Barnabas as gods. It is with great difficult that the disciples "restrained" these zealous idolaters.

19 And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead.

And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium: This is to become a sad pattern that will haunt Paul until his dying day. From this time forward, these children of the devil are never more than a few days behind the apostle. The enemies of Christianity from Antioch and Iconium have joined forces and pursued Paul to Lystra.
who persuaded the people: The fickleness of popular opinion is made evident here. What a reversal of fortune for the Apostle Paul! This same crowd, who has to be restrained to keep them from worshiping Paul as a god, is now convinced to stone him to death. So it is during the life of Jesus. At one time the multitude receives Jesus with the cry of "Hosanna to the highest," and a few days later the same crowd is clamoring for His blood, saying "let Him be crucified" (Matthew 21:9; 27:22)!

and, having stoned Paul: What a short commentary on such a dramatic and gruesome event! One can only guess how some of the red journalists of today would record such a story in their tabloids! In utter simplicity, Luke records this vicious, premeditated attack upon Paul. In hopes of silencing this great preacher forever, the crowd falls upon him without mercy and beat him with rocks to the point that they "suppose" he is dead.

drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead: In keeping with the murderous spirit of this mob, one can imagine that after the bloody deed is done, one or more of the perpetrators grab the assumed lifeless body of Paul by an arm or a leg and drag him through the dirt of the streets out the gate of the city to leave his body to whatever fate might befall it.

This is a time in Paul's life he will never forget. In Paul's own account of his life, he mentions he was stoned only once; and through it all he "endured" and the "Lord delivered" him (2 Corinthians 11:25; 2 Timothy 3:11).
20 Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

**Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him:** This statement indicates the work of Paul and Barnabas is fruitful in Lystra. There are now disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ in this pagan town. These disciples are powerless to prevent the attack on Paul, but now they gather around his body, perhaps for the purpose of at least giving him a decent burial.

It is fair to assume that Lois and Eunice and the young man Timothy are in this band of grieving "disciples" who stand "round about" the bruised body of Paul. Timothy obeys the gospel in Lystra, whether he is baptized before or after Paul is stoned is up to the speculation of the reader (16:1).

**he rose up, and came into the city; and the next day he departed with Barnabas:** The tears of grief shed by this little band of Christians, over the apparent death of this man whom they have come to love, are turned to tears of joy when Paul rises up. The spark of Paul's life is not extinguished. God will not allow it to be extinguished! He lives to preach again! There is much speculation as to how quickly Paul could have recovered from apparent death to the point that he can stand on his own power and the next day make a trip of about twenty miles. There really needs to be no speculation. As Paul says, "the Lord delivered me" (2 Timothy 3:11). Paul has miraculous help from God.
to Derbe: Derbe is a small town about twenty miles southeast of Lystra. This town is about as far east as one can travel and still be in the "regions of Galatia." From what this writer is able to learn about Derbe, this town was a frontier town with a wild and woolly flavor not unlike the old west of the United States. It well could have been this area Paul refers to when he says, "perils of robbers" (2 Corinthians 11:26). Derbe is the last stop on Paul's first missionary journey.

21 And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch,

And when they had preached the gospel to that city: Apparently the preaching of the gospel receives no opposition in Derbe. How long the disciples labor in this effort is not known.

and had taught many: "Many" in this far flung outpost are "taught" God's word. It is probable during this time that Gaius, who later will become a traveling companion of Paul, is converted.

they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch: While at Derbe, Paul and company are "quite near the pass in Mount Taurus, known as the Cilician Gates, and could easily have reached Tarsus and thence taken a short voyage home" (Hurlbut 115). But Paul, being more concerned with the welfare of God's people than with his own safety or comfort, chooses to return by the route he came in order that the infant churches might be strengthened.
Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

Confirming the souls of the disciples: This "confirming" has nothing to do with the erroneous doctrine of the Roman Catholic church, which believes that one receives the seven sacraments at the time of confirmation.

Of the so-called "seven sacred sacraments," only two, namely, baptism and the Lord's Supper, have Greek names, a fact that automatically removes the other five to post-apostolic times and denies them any identification whatever with NT Christianity" (Coffman 283).

Plumptre suggests the word "confirming" should have been rendered "strengthening" as it is in Acts 18:23 (92).

It is Paul's purpose to encourage and build up these small congregations of Christians who are located in such a wild and pagan environment. One can only imagine the temptations and hardships that will befall these young converts who have broken family and social ties to become Christians. They desperately need strengthening!

and exhorting them to continue in the faith: The churches in the regions of Galatia are "exhorted to continue in the faith," that faith being the "one faith" that produces Christians as opposed to the idolatrous beliefs held by the majority of the population in the area (Ephesians 4:5).
and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God: Paul warns these brethren of the impending trials and persecutions that they will be called upon to endure because of their faith in Jesus Christ. No one should fail to see the sacrifices that our forefathers in Christ made in order to keep the faith. But it should also be understood there are still trials and tribulations to be endured by modern Christians. Satan has not given up; he has only changed his tactics. It is still a desperate struggle to keep the faith, but remember the struggle lasts only "ten days" (Revelation 2:10) -- that is, only one short lifetime -- and then there is glory forever.

Here the term "kingdom of God" has a broader meaning than simply God's kingdom or the church on earth of which we all become a member of when we obey the gospel (Matthew 16:18-19). The designation "kingdom of God" may also include heaven, the eternal abode of the saints; this is the case here.

23 And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

And when they had ordained them elders in every church: This is the first time the ordination of elders is mentioned in the New Testament. Several significant points may be drawn from this statement.

To "ordain" simply means to appoint. It is possible the congregation has some input on the selection of these men as is the case with the "deacons" in Acts 6:3.
The term "elder" does not necessarily indicate old in chronological age. When used in reference to this religious office, the word "elder" refers to religious experience. According to Vine, "elder" comes from the Greek word “Presbuteros,” an adjective, the comparative degree of presbus. Vine continues by saying, “presbuteroi indicates their maturity of spiritual experience” (Vol. I 21). The "elders" are also called "bishops" and "pastors" (1 Timothy 3:1; Ephesians 4:11). Each of these names describes a duty of the office or a requirement for the position. "Elder" denotes their experience; a "bishop" by definition is an "overseer" while "pastor" indicates a "shepherd."

It should be noted that a plurality of "elders" is appointed by Paul. This appointment of more than one elder is the scriptural example throughout the New Testament. There may be various reasons for this plurality, but the most obvious one is to avoid a one-man rule in the Lord's church.

In light of the fact that an elder cannot be a "novice" (1 Timothy 3:6), some question how Paul can appoint "elders in every church" when these churches have been in existence for less than two years. Some could count the time since their origin as a matter of months. McGarvey answers this objection in a most logical way:

If any one is surprised that men were found in these newly founded congregations possessed of the high qualifications for the office laid down by Paul in his epistles to Titus and Timothy, he should remember that although these disciples had been but a comparatively short time in the church, many of them were, in character and knowledge of the Scriptures, the ripest fruits of the Jewish synagogue; and they needed only the additional knowledge which the gospel brought, in order to be models of wisdom and piety for the churches. They were no "novices" in the sense of being newly turned away
from wickedness. Cornelius the centurion might represent the class, as respects Gentile converts, and Nathaniel those brought in from the Jews (Vol. II 50-51).

This writer has one final comment on "the appointment of elders in every church." Without contradiction, the appointment of elders is the scriptural way the government of the church is to be established. The apostles quickly accomplish this task in the first century; yet today there are congregations that have been in existence for thirty, forty or more years that still operate without appointing elders to lead the flock. The usual excuse given is "no one qualifies!" If one will study the requirements for elders as given in 1 Timothy 3 or Titus 1, it becomes obvious that the office does not require a "super-human" or a "sinless, perfect Christian." It requires dedicated Christian men who "desire the office of a bishop." To be blunt, every requirement made for an elder should be met by all Christians with these possible exceptions: "husband of one wife, having faithful children, not a novice, apt to teach."

and had prayed with fasting: Prayer and fasting are connected with the service to appoint men to religious offices. This is the case in chapter six in the selection of the seven "deacons" as well as in chapter thirteen when Paul and Barnabas are appointed to their work. Prayer is for the purpose of seeking the approval of God, and fasting is used to concentrate one's focus on the spiritual matters at hand.

There is no reason to believe this same procedure should not be followed in the appointment of men to the Lord's work today.
	hey commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed: The apostles, having done all they can do for the welfare of these infant churches, now leave them with their newly appointed leaders in the hands of God.
24 And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia.

The apostles begin to retrace their steps to Perga where they first landed in their trip from Cyprus. (For notes on Pisidia and Pamphylia, see 13:13-14.)

25 And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia:

And when they had preached the word: It is interesting to note that Luke gives no record of Paul’s preaching the word in Perga on his initial visit to the city (13:13-14). But on the return trip, Paul does preach at Perga. One is still left to surmise the results of the gospel in Perga. Often the omissions of the divinely inspired writers tell as much as what is actually written.


they went down into Attalia: Again, it is necessary to surmise the reason for Paul’s move from Perga to Attalia. It is probable that he is unable to get a vessel bound for Antioch from the port at Perga; therefore, he moves overland to the seaport at Attalia.

Attalia is a seaport on the coast of Pamphylia located on the river Katarrhaktes, sixteen miles from Perga. "The city was named after its founder, Attalus Philadelphus, king of Pergamos" (Unger 108). Today the city is known as Adalia.

26 And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled.

The apostles have now come full circle: they are back to where they started, the city of Antioch.
27 And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.

It is very probable that no word has been heard from the apostles since their departure from Antioch some three or four years before. One can only imagine the excitement of the sponsoring church to discover the first missionaries to the heathen world have returned! It must have been a thrill for Paul to "rehearse" the triumphs of the gospel in this initial thrust to "open the doors of faith to the Gentiles." As McGarvey says, "He who returns from a hard fought field bearing good tidings, pants beneath the burden of his untold story" (Vol. II 52).

The apostles and the church at Antioch have every reason to rejoice as Plumptre says, "... the door of the Father's house was now opened wider than it had ever been before, and that no man might shut it" (93).

28 And there they abode long time with the disciples.

There is no way of knowing how much time this "long time" actually is. The first missionary journey is generally thought to have involved most of the time between A.D. 45 to A.D. 50. This time span also includes the time spent at Antioch, which may have been a year or slightly more.
SUMMARY OF PAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY

Beginning in Antioch in Syria, Paul and Barnabas go down the Orontes River to Seleucia. From there they sail to Cyprus, landing at Salamis. They cross the island of Cyprus to Paphos from which they sail to Perga. They travel overland to Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, Derby, and then return by essentially the same route leaving from the port of Attalia. Boles calculates the trip to have been at least 1208 miles (231). It is truly amazing to consider that this trip is through some of the wildest, most inhospitable terrain on earth. The journey is accomplished without the aid of modern transportation, most of the journey being made on foot. One cannot help being impressed by the burning zeal that drove these first century preachers into the remote corners of the ancient world to declare "the power of God unto salvation." May this spirit of evangelism be rekindled in the hearts of modern men that the world might hear the "good news of Jesus Christ."
Chapter 15

To this point in the efforts of Paul to preach the gospel, his chief adversaries have been either pagans or Jews. Now the opposition comes from within the church. In the first thirty-five verses of this chapter, Paul must deal with the first real internal controversy affecting the church of Christ. Paul must answer for baptizing Gentiles and deal with the attempt to bind the erroneous doctrine of circumcision on the Christian community. In the remainder of the chapter, the dissension between Paul and John Mark comes to light.

1 And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.

And certain men: These "certain men" are Jews of the sect of the Pharisees (verse 5). These men have been previously referred to as "they of the circumcision" (see notes on 11:2).

which came down from Judaea: These "certain men" actually claim to have been sent by the apostles at Jerusalem (verse 24). It is generally understood that these men are the same ones spoken of in Galatians 2:12. The account of this same event that Paul gives in Galatians helps to fill in some of the details left out of Luke's account in Acts. These Judaizing teachers claim they "came from James," thus citing this influential elder in Jerusalem as giving them authority. James denies this in verse 24 saying, "we gave no such commandment."
In spite of the denial made by James, there is evidence that he contributed to this error about circumcision. In chapter twenty-one, it is evident that James is sympathetic with these Christians who are “zealous of the law.” This writer believes that James is implicated in this error to some degree. Whether he gave these “certain men” orders to bind circumcision on Christians is a matter of his word against theirs (see notes on 21:18-24).

**taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses:**

These false teachers are attempting to bind the Jewish rite of circumcision on the Gentile Christians as a requirement for salvation. Although these "certain men" have obeyed the gospel of Jesus Christ and have become Christians, they are not yet ready to give up Old Testament requirements. McGarvey says:

> They could not conceive, as yet, that this divinely given law, (the law of circumcision), which has been in existence so long, and for the preservation of which their fathers have suffered so much, could be disregarded by any who would be heirs of eternal life (McGarvey, Vol. II 54).

**ye cannot be saved:** This mistaken teaching on circumcision is a tremendous threat to the Lord’s church. The gravity of this diversion from the truth cannot be overstated, nor can the results that would have occurred be calculated if the error had not been exposed. The future of Christianity is quite literally at stake!
In any case, if God had not corrected the apostles and the elders in Jerusalem, the entire Christian religion would have been frustrated and perverted. At best, it could thenceforth have been nothing but a Jewish sect, preaching the resurrection of Christ, of course, but nevertheless relying on the law of Moses for salvation. A large company of Pharisees who had become Christians would soon have dominated and destroyed it (Coffman 292).

2 When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.

When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them: Luke here uses characteristic understatement for emphasis when he says "no small dissension and disputation." The indication is that Paul and Barnabas enter into a major discussion or debate in defense of the truth. One can only imagine the fervor shown by the fiery Apostle Paul as he defends the truth that he has received by direct revelation (Galatians 1:12).

they determined that Paul and Barnabas: It appears the brethren at Antioch "determined" to send Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem. There is actually more involved than Luke records. Paul says in Galatians 2:2, "I went up by revelation," thus showing he goes on divine instructions from the Lord. Wild horses could not have kept Paul from going to Jerusalem! Paul intends to get to the heart of this challenge to the gospel of Christ.

and certain other of them: Exactly who "certain other of them" includes is not here indicated. Paul gives the only clue as to who else went to Jerusalem in Galatians 2:1 when he says, "and took Titus with me also."
should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question: It should be clearly understood that Paul and Barnabas are not going up to the church at Jerusalem to receive a ruling on what they are supposed to believe on the circumcision question. Nor should one understand that the Jerusalem church is the headquarters or mother church over the remainder of Christianity. To do so is to miss the purpose of Paul's trip and to compound the error of these false teachers with yet another error. Paul and Barnabas are going to Jerusalem because apparently that is where the problem over circumcision began (verse 24); and this is where James, whom these Judaizing teachers have claimed as giving them authority, lives (Galatians 2:12).

3 And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren.

And being brought on their way by the church: One can appreciate the church at Antioch for its efforts to support preachers who are willing to stand up in defense of the truth. The brethren at Antioch not only are ready to support Paul and Barnabas with their prayers and encouragement, but they are also willing to pay expenses and furnish supplies for the trip.

d they passed through Phenice and Samaria: Paul could have traveled to Joppa, thus avoiding the Canaanite cities and the region of the mongrel Samaritans. The route Paul takes to Jerusalem is in itself an affirmation of the principles for which he is contending (for additional notes, see 11:19 and 8:5).
declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren: It is quite evident the gospel has already made its mark on the hearts of many in these areas. It is generally assumed Philip is the first evangelist here (see notes on chapter eight). It is also evident that "those of the circumcision" have not influenced the brethren in Phenice and Samaria with their error.

The Christians in both of these areas are ready to rejoice at the success of the gospel among the Gentiles. There is great reason for rejoicing: salvation has come to the Gentiles! One can hope that the good Canaanite woman who would "eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table" could now sit at the "Master's table" and eat of the "bread of life" (Matthew 15:22-28).

4 And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them.

And when they were come to Jerusalem: The journey from Antioch to Jerusalem is about three hundred miles in length.

they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them: Paul and Barnabas are not strangers to the church at Jerusalem. One can only imagine the enthusiasm shown by these two returning missionaries for the thrilling work they have just completed among the Gentiles and for the joy it must have stirred in the hearts of their audience with a few exceptions, as will be noted.
5 But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.

**But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed:** This is the first specific mention of any who were members of this "straitest" of all the Jewish sects (26:5) being converted to Christianity with the exception of Paul. The Pharisees have dealt the Lord's church misery from the beginning, but apparently some of even this most hostile group cannot resist the power of the gospel (for additional notes on Pharisees, see 5:34).

**saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses:** (See notes on verse 1 for comments on this contention.) The source of the problem has now been identified as these former Pharisees who have become Christians. These heretics have had some success with their false doctrine among the Jerusalem Christians; and sadly, it is highly likely they have received some sympathy from some of the apostles who ought to know better. One might suspect they hope to run their heresy roughshod over the Apostle Paul. If that is what they hope for, they have vastly underestimated their opponent. Coffman has this to say:

Their love of the forms and ceremonies of Judaism had been brought with them into the church; and it may be assumed that for some considerable time they had been working to graft their own system into Christianity. Not only had they corrupted practically the whole of the church in Judaea, but the recently established churches in Galatia had been visited and corrupted sufficiently to call forth Paul's vehement letter to the Galatians. The representatives they sent down to Antioch probably expected a quick victory there also; but instead of a victory they suddenly confronted the dauntless Paul who challenged them, defeated them, and proceeded to Jerusalem where he reversed
the victory they had already won there. Aside from Christ himself, Christianity owes more to Paul than to any other (294).

6 And the apostles and elders came together for to consider this matter.
7 And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.

And when there had been much disputing: Apparently, no stone is left unturned in this debate. Both sides present their case to the fullest.

Peter rose up, and said unto them: The Apostle Peter once again shows his leadership among the disciples by taking control of the situation.

Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe: Peter is not only the leader of the disciples but also he is the best choice to affirm the status of the Gentiles. After all, it is Peter who first uses the "keys" to open the kingdom of God to the Gentiles at the house of Cornelius (Matthew 16:19; 11:14). It is Peter who baptizes the first Gentile into Christ (10:48). It is time for Peter to stand up. He very well knows salvation has nothing to do with circumcision! Although it has been about ten years since Peter baptized Cornelius, the divinely inspired declaration, “God is no respecter of persons,” is still the truth (10:34).
8 And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us;

And God, which knoweth the hearts: This phrase is common to Peter: he has previously expressed the knowledge that God searches the hearts of men (1:24).

bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost: In the giving of the Holy Spirit to Cornelius, God "bears witness" that the Gentiles are now subject to receive the gospel. It may be safely concluded that if God had not given the Holy Spirit as witness for the Gentiles, Peter would never have preached to them (for more complete notes, see 10:44-48; 11:1-17).

even as he did unto us: This passage is a reference to the "baptism of the Holy Spirit," which first comes to the apostles ("us") on the day of Pentecost; later the house of Cornelius receives the "like gift" as confirmation that the Gentiles are now acceptable to God (see notes on 1:1-4; 11:17).

9 And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.

And put no difference between us and them: This is a very strong point made by Peter. He presses home the fact that God receives the Gentile converts when their faith in Jesus Christ motivates their obedience to the words of the gospel. There is no command for circumcision or law keeping. Coffman says, "Peter's basic understanding of God's will, fortified by his rugged character, enabled him to rise up, as he did here, and pull the rug out from under the whole Pharisaical conspiracy" (295).
purifying their hearts by faith: A basic premise of the Christian system is the fact that there is no difference in God's plan of salvation for Jew or Gentile (10:34-35; Romans 3:22). Salvation is based upon the grace of God, which provides us with what we need not what we deserve. By God's grace we have the "word of His grace" (20:32). When one has faith in this word, it will motivate him to repent and be baptized. (For details on salvation by faith, see notes 10:43.)

10 Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?

Now therefore why tempt ye God: The pronoun "ye" refers to the "apostles and elders" of verse 6. Peter finally takes a stand and charges those who hold this false position as the ones who would put God on trial by questioning His word. It is not God who makes the mistake when He chooses to accept the Gentiles without circumcision. The mistake lies with those who would go beyond the word of God.

It seems obvious the one at fault is the one who has made an addition to the word of God. Circumcision is not a command of the New Testament. These men are at fault in trying to add it. The same is true today. Any time man makes additions to or subtractions from the word, whether it be circumcision, instrumental music, or individual communion cups, it is not God who has made the mistake; it is man.

But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men (Matthew 15:9).
Peter has certainly changed his tune since Paul rebuked him in Antioch for his weakness and obvious hypocrisy in the face of "those of the circumcision." Peter should have opposed the error of this doctrine himself, but his human foibles show themselves. “Peter is to blame,” Paul says (Galatians 2:11). The fact that even the great Apostle Peter has his weaknesses should be an encouragement to everyone trying to live the Christian life. We are all weak in one way or another, and like Peter we sometimes need a wake-up call. A cock crowing brought Peter back to reality on the night Jesus is betrayed; now it takes the reproach of Paul.

to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples: "A yoke" is used here as a figurative expression to indicate something that is a burden, something that would infringe upon one’s freedom. The reasoning is “Why would one desire to go back under the bondage (Galatians 2:4) of the Old Law and give up his new found freedom that is in Christ?” Jesus says, "For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:30).

which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear: No Jew is able to keep the Law perfectly. Even if the Jews could have kept all of the Law without a single transgression, they would not have earned salvation! As will be noted in the next verse, salvation is the result of the grace of God.

11 But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.

But we believe: Peter asserts he is speaking for the apostles in this conclusion of his arguments. Incidentally, this is the last record of any appearance of the Apostle Peter in the book of Acts.
that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved: This statement is meant to be the conclusion of the discussion. It is not through the keeping of the Law that one is saved, but rather salvation is through the "grace of the Lord Jesus Christ" (see notes on 15:9; 20:32).

even as they: Even those who die under the Law (our fathers) must depend upon the "grace of the Lord Jesus" for their salvation. The blood of Jesus, the perfect sacrifice, works in a retroactive way to save those under the Law (Galatians 2:21; Hebrews 10:1-10).

12 Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.

Then all the multitude kept silence: At least temporarily the opposition is silenced by the clear and forcible arguments of Peter.

and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them: Barnabas and Paul begin again the account of the wonderful works of God among the Gentiles that they had started in verse 4 before the interruption by those of the sect of the Pharisees. The thrust of this account of "miracles and wonders... among the Gentiles" is to demonstrate irrevocably that "the mind of God in this matter, already shown in the house of Cornelius, had been abundantly displayed in the blessing He had bestowed upon the Gentiles in Antioch and during the recent mission in Cyprus and Asia Minor" (Bruce 309).
13 And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me:

**And after they had held their peace:** Barnabas and Paul are allowed to finish their speeches without interruption.

**James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me:** The audience has heard from Peter, Barnabas, and Paul; now James speaks. This James is the James distinguished as the Lord's brother and referred to as an apostle by Paul (Galatians 1:19) (see notes on 14:4). James is perhaps the most influential of all the disciples in the Jerusalem church. It is left up to him to conclude the matter under discussion.

14 Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.

**Simeon:** James refers to Peter by his original name of Simeon. The reason for this reference is not known, but Coffman may have hit the nail on the head when he said, "It might have been a little embarrassing to the apostle, under the circumstances, to have called him The Rock (Peter)" (297)!

**hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles:** See notes on verses 7 through 11.

**to take out of them a people for his name:** The Jews have always considered themselves as the ONLY people of God, but now James makes it clear that God also has "a people" who are taken from among the Gentiles (Romans 9:24-26).
15 And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written,

James here affirms the acceptance of the Gentiles as being predicted by the prophets. The scripture here referred to is a loose rendition of those spoken by Amos (Amos 9:11-12). James refers to the prophets in the plural as there were others who prophesied the acceptance of the Gentiles (Isaiah 2:2-4; Micah 4:1-4).

The Jewish Christians are amazed that God extends salvation to the Gentiles, but they should not be. The Old Testament scriptures are filled with predictions of the coming of Jesus, the establishment of the church, etc.; and yet, the majority of the Jews do not recognize Jesus as their Savior. One must conclude it is through ignorance of their own scriptures that the Jews miss Jesus. Sadly, the majority of the world's population today is going to miss Jesus again for the same reason, in this case an ignorance of the New Testament scriptures.

16 After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up:

James now states the prophecy of Amos has been fulfilled. To "build again the tabernacle of David" does not indicate the reestablishment of the literal throne of David but rather the establishment of a spiritual kingdom.

The prophet had in previous verses predicted the downfall of the Jewish kingdom, which would be the overthrow of the tabernacle or house of David, whose descendants were the reigning kings; and in the verses quoted he predicts the rebuilding of the same, no man of David's race became a king until Jesus was enthroned in heaven. This then was the rebuilding of the ruins, ... (McGarvey, Vol. II 66).
17 That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.

That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles: James continues with the teaching of the prophet Amos. He now gets to the main thrust of his argument by pointing out this new spiritual kingdom contains not only Jews, but also Gentiles are included as the people of God.

The conjunction "and" before "all the Gentiles" (v. 17) is epexegetic; a better translation would be "even" or "that is to say". The "residue of men" who are to "seek after the Lord" are identical with "all Gentiles, upon whom my name is called" -- i.e. the elect from every nation (Bruce 310).

upon whom my name is called: Salvation has come to this "residue of men," who have been seeking after the Lord. Beginning with the conversion of the household of Cornelius, the kingdom of God is open to the Gentiles. These who have, for how many hundreds of years, begged for the crumbs that fell from the table are now able to sit at the Lord's table as sons and daughters of God!

saith the Lord, who doeth all these things: This statement affirms this receiving of the Gentiles is the will of God as prophesied by the prophets and fulfilled beginning with Cornelius.
18 Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.

James further concludes the discussion on circumcision by saying it was God's plan from "the beginning" to save the Gentiles without circumcision. The means of salvation and the requirements of Christian fellowship are to be the same for both Jew and Gentile. Since this is the plan of God, it should not be resisted by men.

19 Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God:

Wherefore my sentence is: James, being the last speaker, declares the "sentence" (judgment) of the matter under discussion. This is not a personal judgment; rather it is a decision based upon the evidence of the prophets and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (see verse 28). Some would construe that James is the chairman or president of this conference, but there is no indication the authority of James is of any greater degree than the authority of Peter or Paul.

that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: James concludes that the burdensome rules of the Law should not be bound upon the Gentile Christians.

20 But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.

But that we write unto them, that they abstain from: It is decided that a letter be sent to the Christians in Antioch, containing the following four prohibitions:
1. **pollutions of idols:** This particular restriction is later defined in verse 29 as "meats offered to idols." When animals were sacrificed to an idol, only a small portion of the meat was used in the pagan ceremony. The remainder of the meat was eaten by the idolatrous priests or sold in the meat markets. Under the New Testament, this "eating of meats offered to idols" is a Christian liberty. Paul explains this liberty in 1 Corinthians 8:4 when he says: “an idol is nothing … ” and there is “but one God.”

Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled." “Meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to them that are weak (I Corinthians 8:7-9).

Paul's final conclusion is, "Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth,..." The eating of such "dedicated meats" was strongly opposed by the Jewish Christians who would be classified as the "weaker brother" in this situation.

I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean (Romans 14:14.)

2. **and from fornication:** Ritual fornication is a fundamental feature of numerous pagan cults, a notable example being that of the Temple of Aphrodite at Corinth with its one thousand prostitutes. It is a curious thing among idolators; vice seems to be a virtue.
3. and from things strangled: As noted above, it seems in paganism the heathen practice that which is in direct opposition to the teachings of God. For an example taken to the ultimate degree, we have those today who worship Satan rather than God. Here is another example: Israel has been specifically forbidden to eat any animal that was strangled (the blood must be poured out) (Levitcus 17:13). The heathen often strangled sacrifices, and the meat from "things strangled was considered a delicacy" (Conybeare and Howson 193).

4. and from blood: The drinking of blood was prohibited even before the giving of the Law of Moses (Genesis 9:4). Later Israel received the same law in Levitcus 7:27. Here again, the pagans turned the prohibitions of God into a rite of their idolatry, often drinking the blood of their sacrifices. Even in modern times, one of the most repulsive and abominable practices of Satanic cults is the practice of drinking blood.

To explain the reason these four prohibitions are attached to the Gentile Christians certainly has its problems. There are those who think these requirements are of a temporary and perhaps local nature and will pass from existence when the relationships between Jews and Gentiles moderate in time. Others believe the ceremonial portions of the Law of Moses are bound upon all Christians for all ages. Still others believe these restrictions predate the Law, having been given to the Patriarchs as an eternal law, and "will continue to be until the end of the world" (McGarvey, Vol. II 67).

It should forever be remembered there is no Jewish ceremony necessary for salvation! On the contrary, Jesus came "to redeem them that were under the Law" (Galatians 4:5) that they might be saved by faith in the gospel of Christ (Romans 1:16). Therefore, it is the conclusion of this writer that all four of these prohibitions have to do with the practice of the worship of idols, a practice very common among the Gentiles and one abhorred by the Jews. The
purpose of this letter to the Gentiles is to remind them of the "pollution of idols," out of which they came when they became Christians. This teaching would also greatly improve the social relationship between the Gentile Christians and their Jewish brethren. It is a difficult thing for our generation to understand the extent of the cultural gap, both social and religious, between the Jews and the Gentiles of the first century. Jesus Christ is the only motivation that could have ever inspired the effort to reconcile both Jew and Gentile (Ephesians 2:11-22).

21 For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.

There is some discussion as to the meaning of this verse, but it seems James is saying the Jewish Christians have had ample opportunity to know of these four prohibitions as the Law has been taught from "old time" "every sabbath day." But it is necessary to write this letter to the Gentile converts that they might also understand these restrictions even as their Jewish brothers.

22 Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren:

Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church: The decision is unanimous. The speeches of these four men have made clear the will of God. The false contentions for circumcision have been silenced, the error has been corrected, and all that is lacking is to inform the brethren at Antioch.
to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas: The brethren decide to send "men of their own company" with Paul and Barnabas. This is a wise decision as these men can verify the conclusions reached by the disciples. The testimony of Paul and Barnabas alone might have been considered biased.

namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas: Very little is known of this particular character with the exception of what is revealed here. Reese speculates "that the `Joseph called Barsabbas' of Acts 1:23 and `Judas called Barsabbas' here mentioned are brothers, because they both are called `sons of Sabbas`" (423).

and Silas: This may have been the first meeting of Paul and Silas, also known as Silvanus (2 Corinthians 1:19; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1). Silas is soon to become the faithful companion of Paul on his second and third missionary journeys.

chief men among the brethren: Judas and Silas are "chief men," that is men of influence and leadership among the brethren of the Jerusalem church. They are the caliber of men whose testimonies would be unimpeachable. They are also "prophets," according to verse 32.

Before leaving the subject of this gathering of the "apostles, elders, and the whole church," there is one last comment that needs to be made. Contrary to the contentions of the Catholic church, this meeting is not the "first general council" of the church.

Be it observed, too, that while this conference is constantly referred to by Romanists and other supporters of episcopacy, as the first general council, it was no general council at all. It was not composed of representatives from the congregations of a district, however small, but of the members of a single church. Furthermore, it decided, on the authority of the inspired men who directed its decisions, a question of doctrine
affection the salvation of souls; and this no set of men except the apostles have ever had the right to do. In no sense, then, can its action be pleaded as a precedent for the existence of any ecclesiastical court whatever outside of the individual congregations, or for the purpose of settling by authority any questions of doctrine (McGarvey, Vol. II 70).

There is absolutely no reason to believe this unique episode establishes the concept of a central headquarters for the Lord's church from which rulings on the scriptures are handed down, nor does it give the authority for any ecumenical council (a.k.a. annual convention) to assemble to settle questions of doctrine by its authority or majority vote. Each congregation of the church is autonomous, governed by the teachings of the Holy Scriptures.

23 And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia:

And they wrote letters: This is believed to be the first "epistle," as it is referred to in verse 30, that is issued from the apostles. It is likely this letter circulated among the churches until it is incorporated into the book of Acts.

by them: According to Barnes, the literal wording in the Greek is "by their hand" (472).

after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles: Reese says, “The ancients were always accustomed to sign their letters first, give the address second, and the word of greeting third. This was the formal style of letter writing” (423).
in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia: Since the problem of circumcision begins in Antioch, the letter is directed there; but, as is the usual case with church problems, it is evident the contention has spread. The letter is also addressed to Syria, the country of which Antioch is the capital, and the adjoining country of Cilicia, a portion of southern Galatia.

24 Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment:

Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words: The letter explains the brethren in Jerusalem "have heard" of the problems created by the false doctrines of "those of the circumcision." The tenor of this letter is very cordial and shows a genuine concern for the welfare of the Gentile Christians.

subverting your souls: The degree to which the Gentile Christians have been disturbed by this erroneous teaching needs to be appreciated. Vincent comments, "The idea here is that of turning the minds of the Gentile converts upside down; throwing them into confusion like a dismantled house" (526).

saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment: The letter plainly asserts the need for circumcision and the keeping of the Law are commandments not given by the inspired apostles. These false teachers have brought innovations into the New Testament church for which there is no divine authority. Although the leaders at Jerusalem affirm, “...we gave no such commandment,” there is some question as to the implication of James (see notes on verse 1 above and 21:18-24).
Man has not changed his digressive ways. Although the innovation of circumcision is not an issue among modern Christians, the debate over innovations for which there is "no such commandment" still rages today. Such additions to the teachings of God's word as instrumental music, individual communion cups, Bible classes, women teachers, etc., still must be opposed by those who demand a “thus saith the Lord.”

25 It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,
26 Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.
27 We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth.

The wording of this letter is most complimentary to Paul and Barnabas who certainly deserve some respect for their devotion to preaching the gospel to the heathen. Their efforts to evangelize are appreciated for the hazardous work that it truly is. The letter also explains the reason for sending Judas and Silas (see notes on verse 22).

28 For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things;

It is very important to establish that the events of the meeting, the conclusions reached, and the method of implementing the decisions are all under the direction of the Holy Spirit (see notes on verse 19.)
29 That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things
strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare
ye well.

This verse rehearses the decision made to bind only these four prohibitions upon the Gentile
Christians (see notes on verse 20.) With the following statement from Coffman, the discussion
on these issues will close:

The principal barrier to social and religious unity among the Jewish and Gentile
Christians was the low standard of behavior so common among the latter. Idol feasts
were shameful debaucheries, marked by the most vulgar and immoral behavior, the
prohibitions against pollution of idols and fornication being almost, in fact, one
prohibition. In fact, it is possible that all four of these restrictions relate to idol worship
(299).

30 So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered
the multitude together, they delivered the epistle:

The disciples waste no time in getting the letter to the brethren in Antioch. The church is
gathered and the letter read.

31 Which when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation.

There is certainly a reason to rejoice. The liberty of the New Testament has been established,
and the yoke of the Old Testament is loosed. Under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, one of
the most divisive elements to confront the New Testament church has been met and defeated.
32 And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them.

The purpose for Judas and Silas' accompanying Paul and Barnabas back to Antioch now is seen. They stand as witnesses of the decisions delivered in the epistle. This verse also states that these men are "prophets" (for additional notes on prophets, see 11:27).

33 And after they had tarried there a space, they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles.

34 Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still.

After serving the purpose for which they have come, Silas and Judas are dismissed to return to Jerusalem. Silas chooses to remain in Antioch where he will soon embark upon another adventure as the new traveling companion of Paul.

35 Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

The field at Antioch is still "white unto harvest," and Paul wastes no time. He is busy "teaching and preaching." If a distinction might be shown between "teaching" and "preaching," it can be that "teaching" is a more informal instructing in the word of God, perhaps privately while "preaching" is a more formal proclaiming of the good news of Jesus Christ in a public setting.
36 And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do.

After an indefinite time of preaching and building up the brethren in Antioch, the evangelistic fire is again kindled in Paul. He proposes to visit the congregations that were established on his first journey as recorded in chapters thirteen and fourteen. It is Paul's intention to take Barnabas with him again until Barnabas insists on taking his nephew, John Mark.

37 And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark.

Barnabas has "determined" to give his nephew a second chance. One will remember that John Mark abandoned the first missionary effort (see notes on 12:12; 13:13.)

38 But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.

It is likely Barnabas can see extenuating circumstances for the action of his nephew because of his kinship, but Paul sees only the desertion of John Mark from the Lord's work, an action for which he has no sympathy.

39 And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus;

And the contention was so sharp between them: Here is an example of two strong-willed Christian men who have what Vincent defines as an "angry dispute" (528). It is not to be understood that either of these divinely inspired men is led by the Holy Spirit in this contention. The best of friends may differ on decisions of personal preference or expediency.
that they departed asunder one from the other: This heated disagreement separates Paul from his longtime friend and companion, Barnabas. There are two things that should be noted in order to gather up all of the loose ends in this dissension between Paul and Barnabas.

This disagreement does not produce a permanent rift between Paul and Barnabas and John Mark. Mark is later restored to the confidence of Paul who refers to him as "profitable to me for the ministry" (2 Timothy 4:11). Barnabas is later commended by Paul (1 Corinthians 9:6).

There is good that is realized from this sad and unfortunate situation. Those involved do not allow their differences to hinder the Lord's work. Now there are two teams of missionaries in the field where there was just one.

and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus: This is the last time we hear of Barnabas or John Mark in the book of Acts. Luke does not follow the adventures of Barnabas as he returns to his native Cyprus; thus, our window closes here on a rather sad note. Our spirits are lifted by this happy note from McGarvey:

The separation of Barnabas from Paul is our separation from Barnabas; for his name is not again mentioned by Luke. But as we bid him a final farewell, the sails are spread which are to bear him over the sea, that he may make the islands glad with the knowledge of salvation; and the later incidents of his noble life will be made known to us when we sit down with him in the everlasting kingdom" (Vol. II 76).
40 And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God.

And Paul chose Silas, and departed: Paul chooses Silas, the prophet from Jerusalem, as his new traveling companion (see notes on 15:22).

being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God: This recommendation most likely involves a gathering of the whole church for the special purpose of bidding the departing missionaries Godspeed. A similar event occurred at the beginning of the first missionary journey (13:3).

41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.

Paul begins his efforts to visit the churches he has established, starting in the immediate country of Syria and proceeding on to Cilicia (see notes on 15:23). "Confirming" is used in the general sense of "strengthening."

What a dramatic chapter this one is! A major division over the attempt to bind circumcision upon the Gentile Christians is avoided primarily because of the strong leadership of the indomitable Apostle Paul. The disciples who have sympathized with "those of the circumcision" (including Peter) are now corrected and on the right track. The disagreement between Paul and Barnabas over the defector John Mark is decided, and Paul's second missionary effort has begun with Silas as his new companion.
Chapter 16

This chapter continues the history of Paul's second missionary journey with its accompanying events, including the call to Macedonia, the conversion of Lydia, the healing of the girl possessed by a demon, the conversion of the Philippian jailor, and the departure from Philippi.

1 Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek:

Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: There must have been many painful memories to cloud the mind of Paul as he once again makes his way to the city of Lystra. It was here that he was stoned and left for dead on his first missionary trip (14:19). On this second trip, Paul will discover that his former efforts were very fruitful, particularly in the conversion of a young preacher named Timothy. (For a description of Derby and Lystra, see notes on 14:6.)

and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus: Here is the first introduction to the young man Timothy, a character who will play an important role in the furtherance of the gospel.
He had been baptized during Paul's previous visit to Lystra; he had witnessed the stoning of Paul; had wept over his prostrate form; had seen him, as if raised from the dead, rise up and return into the city; and had seen him depart on the next day with unconquerable determination into another field of conflict for Christ (McGarvey, Vol. II 79).

It is this young man who will become Paul's "son in the faith" (1 Timothy 1:2).

**the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed:** Timothy is blessed with a godly grandmother named Lois and a godly mother named Eunice. As a result of the influence of these good women, Timothy also has the "unfeigned faith" that will lead him in a life of service to God (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15).

Influence is a frightening force. It is the one thing that lives on after one dies. The value of the influence of godly parents and grandparents cannot be overestimated. The effect of a good influence can be a vital factor in bringing about eternal good for children and grandchildren.

**but his father was a Greek:** The phrase "was a Greek" is used to express the idea that Timothy's father is a heathen.

2 Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium.

This verse indicates the good reputation of Timothy is not confined to his hometown of Lystra, but he is also "well reported of" in the more distant city of Iconium. This verse also seems to indicate that Timothy's being ordained to preach the gospel "with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery" has already happened (1 Timothy 4:14). (For notes on Iconium, see 14:1.)
Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek.

Him would Paul have to go forth with him: Paul immediately recognizes in Timothy those qualities that will make him a valuable asset as a missionary; therefore, Paul determines to take Timothy on this journey.

and took and circumcised him: The fact that Paul circumcises Timothy is not to make him a Christian as he is already a Christian. Paul has gone on record, in the previous chapter, to show emphatically that circumcision is not a requirement for entrance into the Christian fellowship; nor is this procedure performed to allow Timothy to attain to some higher calling in Christianity. The reason for the circumcision of Timothy is revealed in the next phrase.

because of the Jews which were in those quarters: Here is the reason for the circumcision of Timothy. Timothy is circumcised "because of the Jews." Paul, in an attempt to avoid future criticism and to prevent a certain source of contention from the Jews, circumcises Timothy as a matter of expediency.

There is some discussion as to whether Paul is inconsistent in refusing to circumcise Titus (Galatians 2:3) and then, shortly thereafter, circumcising Timothy. There is no need for misunderstanding. The two cases are entirely different. In the case of Titus, who is a full-blooded Greek, the effort to have him circumcised is an attempt to enforce circumcision as an act necessary for salvation. In the case of Timothy, who has been raised as a Jewish boy, the act is voluntary and for the simple purpose of expediency.
Those who insisted on the ceremony in the case of Titus were Christians, who were endeavoring to burden the Gospel with the yoke of the Law. Those for whose sake Timothy became obedient to one provision of the Law were Jews, whom it was desirable not to provoke, that they might be delivered from bondage. By conceding, Timothy (and Paul) furthered the cause of the Gospel and prejudice was conciliated. The results of yielding in the case of Titus would have been disastrous, and a serious compromise of the Gospel (Thompson, Studies in Acts 181).

Reese gives additional information about this apparent inconsistency in Paul’s dealing with the issue of circumcision:

Paul did all he could to win the Jews, short of compromising the Gospel. If Paul had circumcised Titus, men would have construed that as evidence of the necessity of circumcision for salvation. No one, however, would so misunderstand the circumcision of Timothy; in fact, uncircumcision in him would have been a stumbling-block especially to the Jews. (Timothy has long been a Christian, and thus no one would think that he now needed circumcision to be saved). The decree of the Jerusalem council has made it clear that circumcision had nothing to do with salvation. The Gentile did not have to begin practicing it, nor did the Jew have to cease practicing it, to be saved. In the Christian age, circumcision is one of the things that falls in the realm of Christian liberty (434).

"And unto the Jews I became a Jew that I might gain the Jews..." (1 Corinthians 9:20).

for they knew all that his father was a Greek: This is the reason given to explain why Timothy has not been circumcised, although he is raised with Jewish influences. He has not been circumcised because "his father was a Greek."
4 And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem.

And as they went through the cities: These cities, include such places as Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch of Pisidia where churches have been previously established.

they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem: These decrees are the conclusions arrived at during the meeting in Jerusalem (15:28-29). The essential teaching of these decrees is that the Gentile Christians are not to be burdened with the binding of remnants of the Law. Circumcision and other forms of law keeping are not requirements for salvation. Evidently, the young churches are provided with copies of these decrees so that they may have a defense against the Judaizing Christians.

5 And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.

Here is a continuation of a pattern that has been previously established (2:41; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 19:20). When error is exposed, discipline is enforced, and Christian men have the courage to stand for the truth, the Lord's church always benefits. As a result of Paul's stand against "those of the circumcision" and his rebuke of those who would sympathize with their erroneous doctrine, the church daily grows spiritually (in the faith) and numerically (see notes on 6:7)!

By no means is this the end of the assault by Judaizers upon the Lord's church. Their influence is not removed from the first century church until the removal of the Jewish state itself with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 by the armies of Titus.
Even now, nearly two millennia afterward, the Judaizers are still in business: (1) attempting to bind sabbath observance on Christians, (2) dragging instruments of music into worship (even though David himself was condemned for that), (3) devising daily "sacrifices," such as that of the Mass, (4) ordaining a "priesthood" separate from the "laity," (5) the lighting of sacred candles, (6) the requirement of certain periods of official, formal fasts, and (7) the imposition of diet restrictions, etc., etc. (Coffman 307).

6 Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia,

Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia: "Phrygia is a province of Asia Minor, inland. Once it seemed to include the greater part of the peninsula of Asia Minor, then it was divided into Phrygia Major and Minor... The country was fertile, and its rich pastures made it famous for its breeds of cattle" (Unger 863). The cities of Iconium, and Laodicea are situated in Phrygia.

and the region of Galatia: "The Roman Galatia was the central region of the peninsula of Asia Minor, ... It would be difficult to define the exact limits. In fact they were frequently changing" (Unger 385).

and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word: Luke does not tell exactly how the Holy Ghost communicates this information to the Apostle Paul. The information could have been delivered directly to Paul by the Spirit, or he could have received the message from one of the prophets as is the case with Agabus in Acts 21:10.
in Asia: The term "Asia" does not refer to the continent of Asia as it is known today but rather to the Roman province in Asia Minor of which Ephesus is the principal city. It is here that the "seven churches of Asia," as mentioned in Revelation, are located.

7 After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.

After they were come to Mysia: Mysia is yet another province of Asia Minor. It is located in the northwest corner of Asia Minor, separated from the continent of Europe by the Aegean Sea.

they assayed to go into Bithynia: Paul considers turning to the north to go to yet another province in Asia Minor, Bithynia. "Assayed" is old English for "endeavored, attempted, tried" to go (Reese 437).

but the Spirit suffered them not: Again, the course chosen by Paul is vetoed by the Holy Spirit. Here is Paul's dilemma: he is forbidden to go northwest toward Bithynia, and he has completed the work in the area to the east and southeast through which he has already passed. There is one direction left. Go west, Paul!

8 And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas.

And they passing by Mysia: Paul does not tarry in Mysia. Luke does not tell us the reason for the quick trip through Mysia. It is very possible Paul sees no opportunity for the preaching of the gospel. It may have also been the excitement generated by this mysterious leading of the Holy Spirit that is driving the apostle on. Surely the disciples are wondering to what fields of endeavor God is directing them.
came down to Troas: Troas is a major seaport on the Aegean Sea, located on the far west side of Asia Minor. Authorities agree that this city was located on or near the ancient city of Troy of Trojan horse fame. Troas will prove to be the door for the spread of the gospel to Europe.

9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us.

And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: The disciples are not left for long without instructions. Paul receives a "vision... in the night" perhaps while he is sleeping. This vision is not merely a dream but rather a means of supernatural communication. This is not an uncommon means of communication for Paul as will be noted later in Acts 18:9; 23:11; and 27:23.

There stood a man of Macedonia: The subject in this vision is a man, in particular, a Macedonian.

Macedonia was the province north of Greece, and was famous in history from its conquering kings, Philip and his greater son, Alexander. Its boundaries were: on the north, the Haemus or Balkan Mountains; on the east, Thrace and the Aegean Sea; on the south, Achaia (Greece); on the west, the Pindus Mountains, ... (Hurlbut 118).

and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us: The message from this "man of Macedonia" is a plea for help. As will soon be noted, the help so desired is the preaching of the gospel. Conybeare and Howson make the following observation on this "Macedonian call":
It was the voice of the sick inquiring for a physician, -- of the ignorant seeking wisdom, --
the voice which ever since has been calling on the Church to extend the Gospel to
Heathendom, --"Come over and help us" (244).

10 And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into
Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel
unto them.

And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia:
There is no hesitation in the disciples. "Immediately," apparently the very next morning, they
make preparation to answer this "Macedonian call." It should be noted that here Luke uses the
term "we" to describe the company of missionaries. By speaking in the first person (we) Luke
includes himself with Silas and Timothy as traveling companions of Paul. To attempt to
explain exactly when or where Luke joined Paul's missionary expedition only winds up in
speculation as the scriptures do not tell.

assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them: The
uncertainty is now over. Through the leading of the Holy Spirit, the disciples now turn their
attention to the west. The gospel will soon be preached to the Macedonians.

11 Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and
the next day to Neapolis;

Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia: There
seems to be a special urgency to get the gospel to Macedonia. God certainly shows His hand
in this effort; even the weather cooperates. "With a straight course is a nautical term for sailing
before the wind" (Vincent 529). McGarvey has the following to say:
The remark, "we made a straight course to Samothrace," implies a favorable wind; for only with such a wind can a sailing vessel make a straight course. We have evidence, too, that this favorable wind was blowing a stiff breeze, which bore the ship along rapidly; for on a subsequent journey (xx. 6) five days were occupied in the same voyage (Vol. II 86).

"Samothracia was an island in the Aegean Sea off the Thracian coast, about sixty miles from Troas" (Reese 439). The island lay in a northwesterly direction from Troas. It was customary for those traveling by ship in those days to put into the nearest harbor at day's end; thus, Samothracia provides the harbor at the end of the first day's journey.

and the next day to Neapolis: After the next day of sailing, the party puts in at the city that serves as the harbor for Philippi, the city of Neapolis. The name "Neapolis" literally means "new town." "The town.... was in Thrace, about twelve miles from Philippi, ... It has been identified, on adequate grounds, with the modern Kavalla, where a Roman aqueduct, columns, and Greek and Latin inscriptions remain to attest the former importance of the city" (Plumptre 104). Without reservation one can now say the gospel has landed in Europe!

12 And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days.

And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: Luke provides geographical and political information on the city of Philippi. De Welt gives the following comments:
The city of Philippi was a monumental record to two vast empires. It had been once an obscure place called Krenides from its streams and springs; but Philip, the father of Alexander, had made it a frontier town to protect Macedonia from the Thracians and had helped to establish his power by the extremely profitable working of its neighboring gold mines. Augustus, proud of the victory over Brutus and Cassius, won at the foot of the hill on which it stands, and on the summit of which Cassius had committed suicide, --elevated it to the rank of a colony which made it, as Luke calls it, if not the first yet certainly "a first city of that district of Macedonia" (216-217).

The Romans used the term "colony" to describe a city that had the special distinction of enjoying all the privileges of Imperial Rome. It is in this context that the disciples are about to encounter their first community of Roman citizens.

The colony was used for three different purposes in the course of Roman history: As a fortified outpost in a conquered country; as a means of providing for the poor of Rome; and as a settlement for veterans who had served their time. ... The idea of a colony was, that it was another Rome transferred to the soil of another country (Vincent 529).

_and we were in that city abiding certain days:_ It seems there are a few days of delay before Paul actually enters into his work of preaching the gospel. It may be surmised that this time is necessary for the preachers to become acquainted with their new and substantially different environment. Also, it is apparent from the next verse that they are waiting for Saturday (the sabbath) to arrive in hopes of finding a gathering to preach to.
13 And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither.

And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made: It had become the custom of the disciples to seek out the Jewish assembly on the sabbath, but it soon becomes apparent that there is no synagogue in Philippi. Lenski provides the following explanation:

At least ten men were required to organize a synagogue. No mention is made of Jewish men in Philippi, and it is a question whether any men were connected with the prayer-place beside the Gangites River. ... Only women had gathered there, and we have no idea how they conducted their worship. ... One reason that no men were present may be the fact that, when Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome, the colony city of Philippi had followed his example (655).

(For addition notes on meeting on the sabbath, see 13:14.)

and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither: Luke indicates that each of the preachers takes advantage of this opportunity to teach this gathering of religious women. Here is a great lesson for any preacher. Regardless of how large or how small the audience may be or the gender or socio-economic status, take advantage by doing the best job possible to preach the gospel. Great results often occur, as will happen here.
14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

And a certain woman named Lydia: The character and occupation of this God-fearing woman are revealed in this verse. It is deduced that since there is no mention of Lydia’s having a husband, she is a single woman, perhaps a widow who is carrying on the family business. It is evident she is a successful business woman who has become very well-to-do by the purchasing of purple goods in her native Thyatira for resale elsewhere. The purple dye used to dye the goods, sold by Lydia, is very expensive and one has to have a considerable financial investment to trade in these goods. In spite of her active participation in this successful business, she does not neglect the opportunity to leave the hustle and bustle of the busy city to spend the sabbath day in prayer to God on the bank of the river.

A seller of purple: Lydia makes her living by selling a very costly dye. According to Unger:

This dye is a brilliant red-blue color prized by the ancients for dyeing garments (Prov. 31:22; Jer. 10:9). The chief source of the famous Tyrian purple was the tiny mollusk (murex) found along the coast of Phoenicia and adjacent lands. ... Great labor was required to extract the purple dye and hence only royalty and the wealthy could afford the resulting richly colored garments (Luke 16:19 Revelation 17:4) (904).

Of the city of Thyatira: Hurlbut gives the following description of the city of Thyatira:
Thyatira was a city in the province of Lydia, on the road from Pergamos to Sardis. It was founded by Alexander the Great, who planted it with people from Macedonia, which may account for the fact that "Lydia of Thyatira" was found by Paul at Philippi, in Macedonia. Although never a great city, it was a prosperous manufacturing town, and its scarlet cloth still has a reputation throughout the Orient. It is now a place with a population of from 17,000 to 20,000, and is called ak Hissar, "white castle" (131).

**which worshipped God:** In the midst of the pagan influences about her, Lydia desires to serve the only true and living God. She, like the devout centurion Cornelius of chapter ten, is a true proselyte of the gate, a "God-fearer" who will soon be introduced to her Savior, Jesus Christ. Lydia demonstrates religious character in her basic love for and desire to worship God. Sadly, this religious quality that brings one to God is lacking in most of today's society.

**heard us:** This good woman of Thyatira listens to these men of God. The "power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16) is now at work in her mind; good things are about to happen. This "hearing of the word" will produce faith and obedience in her life (see also 2:38; 8:37,38; Romans 10:17).

**whose heart the Lord opened:** The Lord opens Lydia's heart with His gospel as preached by Paul. There is no reason to believe the Holy Spirit works in any way directly on Lydia. It is not the plan of God to save sinners by a direct operation of the Spirit, but rather sinners are saved by the preaching of the gospel. God opens Lydia's heart in the same way he opens the heart of the Ethiopian, by bringing a preacher to the right place at the right time (see notes on 8:29). Perhaps now we can better understand why Paul is not allowed to turn to the right or the left in his journey; there are honest hearts waiting for the gospel in Macedonia.
Following is a summation of the conversion of Lydia:

1. She first "heard" the gospel.
2. Her heart is "opened" by the gospel plea.
3. She "gave heed" ("attended unto") to the things "spoken of Paul."
4. She obeys--she is baptized (verse 15).

that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul: Vine defines the original Greek word here rendered "attended unto" as meaning "to give heed to." "It suggests devotion of thought and effort to a thing" (Vol. I 87). Lydia, upon serious consideration of the words of the gospel, obeys.

It has been noted that in the "vision" Paul experiences, he sees a "man of Macedonia," but upon arrival he meets a group of women. Here is the providence of God at work.

He had directed the journey of Paul by land and sea, and had timed the motion of the ship with reference to that weekly prayer meeting, as he had once directed the flight of an angel from heaven, and timed the steps of Philip with reference to movements of the eunuch's chariot. Now, as in those instances, he answers the prayers of the unconverted, not by direct operations of the Holy Spirit within them, but by bringing to them the gospel on the lips of a living preacher;... (McGarvey, Vol. II 89-90).
15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.

And when she was baptized: Every conversion in the New Testament, without exception, concludes with the baptism of the subject. It must be understood that there is no remission of sin, thus no salvation, until the person is baptized (see notes on 2:38; 8:12). When Lydia obeys the word of her Lord in baptism, she becomes Paul's first Christian convert in Europe.

and her household: Those who practice infant baptism depend upon this passage and some liberal reading "between the lines" to prove their practice. Indeed it takes a stretch of the imagination and much assumption to find babies in this account. The Bible account says Paul "spoke unto the women which resorted thither" (13). There is no reason to assume there are children or even men present. The word does not tell us that Lydia has children or even that she is married. The household here spoken of consisted of those adult females who accompany Lydia.

she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us: Hospitality is one of the outstanding virtues of the Lord's people. There seems to have been some reluctance on the part of Paul to abide in the home of Lydia, but she constrained the preachers to enter into her house with this humble appeal: if they "judged her as faithful to the Lord," could they not accept her offer of hospitality?
16 And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying:

And it came to pass, as we went to prayer: It appears this place of prayer by the riverside becomes a regular gathering place for the disciples to teach the gospel.

a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination: After an unknown period of time, the apostles encounter a "young girl, a maid" (Vine, Vol. I 266), who has the terrible fate of being possessed with a demon. In Bibles with a marginal reading, the reader may note that the term "spirit of divination" could have been rendered "a Python spirit." Vincent has the following to say about such a spirit:

Python, in the Greek mythology, was the serpent which guarded Delphi. According to the legend, as related in the Homeric hymn, Apollo descended from Olympus in order to select a site for his shrine and oracle. Having fixed upon a spot on the southern side of Mount Parnassus, he found it guarded by a vast and terrific serpent, which he slew with an arrow, and suffered its body to rot in the sun. Hence the name of the serpent Python (rotting); ... The name Python was subsequently used to denote a prophetic demon, and was also used of soothsayers who practiced ventriloquism, or speaking from the belly. The word ventriloquist, occurs in the Septuagint, and is rendered having a familiar spirit (see Levit. xix.31; xx. 6, 27; 1 Sam. xxviii. 7-8) (531).
met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying: This damsel in distress is a slave girl who is being used by her owners as a source of revenue. She is a "soothsayer" or a fortune teller. There is no reason to believe she really can foretell the future; but because of the demoniac crying of the girl, people believe her claims. Today there are modern day "soothsayers" who are willing to take advantage of the ignorance of those who want to believe in such foolishness as fortune tellers, palm readers, psychics, horoscopes, etc., and are willing to pay for it.

17 The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation.

The same followed Paul and us, and cried: This poor tormented soul has made it a daily habit (verse 18) to follow the disciples as they go about their business. Several explanations may be presented for this behavior. Plumptre gives the following:

We lose much of the human interest of the narrative if we merely think of a demon bearing, as in mockery, his witness to the work of Christ, in order that he might thwart that work. That continual cry spoke, we may well believe, of the girl's mind as longing for deliverance, and peace, and calm. She sees in the preachers those whom she recognizes as able to deliver her, as unlike as possible to the masters who traded on her maddened misery (106).

saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation: The declaration of this damsel that these men are servants of God who are teaching "the way of salvation," could have been a fact she learned by being in regular attendance at the place of prayer where the preachers taught. It is also possible that she gained this knowledge through her "spirit of divination" (Mark 1:24; 3:11; Luke 4:41).
That she refers to "the most high God" is further proof of her demon possession. The evil spirits who dwelt in the man of the "country of the Gadarenes" also recognize "the most high God" (Mark 5:7).

18 And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.

And this did she many days: Paul is reluctant to do anything about the condition of this damsel for reasons that will become obvious. It is likely Paul delays any action because he has work yet to do in Philippi. When he finally does cast out the spirit, he has to leave the city (16:39-40).

But Paul, being grieved: Vincent says the word "grieved" is "not strong enough. Rather, worn out. Both grieved at the sad condition of the woman, and thoroughly annoyed and indignant at the continued demonstrations of the evil spirit which possessed her" (532). The question arises, why would Paul be "grieved" over one who is proclaiming the truth?

The answer can only be, that to have accepted demons as witnesses to the gospel would have convinced the people that there was an alliance between them and the apostles; and thus all the good repute of the apostles would have been reflected on the demons, and all the evil repute of the demons would likewise have been reflected on the apostles (McGarvey, Vol. II 96).
turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour: Paul finally acts upon the circumstances of the damsel. He rebukes the demon "in the name of Jesus Christ" (by the authority of Jesus Christ, (Mark 16:17) and the demon obeys immediately and comes out of the girl (see notes on 2:38).

What happens to the young lady who is now relieved of the demon that has tormented her must be left to speculation; but may we hope she claimed a share in "the way of salvation" proclaimed by the apostles.

19 And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the marketplace unto the rulers,

And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone: It is easily noted, in the priorities of wicked men, that one may insult their moral character, slander their name, impugn their ethics with little or no consequences; but, if one wants to avoid trouble, he does not touch their moneybag! The spirit of Demetrius the silversmith (19:24-32) is alive and well in Philippi, even as it is in our world today. Gone with the evil spirit is the potential for financial gain. Paul has certainly gored the sacred cow of these slave masters. Trouble will not be long in coming for the apostles.

they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the marketplace unto the rulers: Paul and Silas are quickly apprehended in a sort of "citizen's arrest" and dragged into the "marketplace" or "agora." "The agora was the public square or forum where the people gathered for business and other purposes. The magisterial offices, courts, etc., were usually located at or near the market place" (Lenski 666).
For a reason that is not given, Timothy and Luke are spared this arrest and subsequent punishment. It may simply have been that Timothy and Luke are not as conspicuous as are Paul and Silas.

20 And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city,

And brought them to the magistrates: The term "rulers" as used in verse 19 and "magistrates" in verse 20 refer to the same two men.

"Magistrates" is from the Greek strategois, and literally means "the leader of an army, or general." In civil life this term was applied to the civic rulers, the duumviri (two men) who were the highest office holders in the colonies (Reese 446).

saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city: What are the charges? Is not the problem the fact that Paul has robbed these men of their livelihood when he casts the demon out of their slave girl? These cunning devils have skirted the real issue and have done what would be called playing the "race card" today. The real complaint is passed over in preference to blaming two Jews for a civil disorder. It would have been much more difficult to receive a favorable judgment on the charge of losing the services of a slave girl whom they are exploiting, but in this heathen city any charge against a Jew would prejudice the court. Lensky says, "The single word "Jews" was thrown out like a firebrand. The emperor Claudius had recently expelled all Jews from Rome (18:2), and it was the pride of every colonial city to become more or less a replica of Rome" (668).
21 And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans.

These vengeful slave masters show their hypocrisy by the charges they present against the apostles. These worldly fellows are not the least bit concerned with religion, but it is the charge of introducing a new religion that they bring against Paul.

The Roman law forbade Romans to introduce or practice any new religion; they were required to worship their own gods and no others. The Jews were permitted to practice their own religion, provided they did not attempt to proselyte Roman citizens. Hence, when Paul and Silas preached Jesus, they were preaching a new religion and were subject to prosecution and punishment according to Roman law. The owners of this girl sought vengeance on Paul and Silas by thus bearing witness against them (Boles 260).

22 And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them.

And the multitude rose up together against them: It should be noted there is no formal trial for Paul and Silas. The general population is caught up in this nationalistic fervor to do something to these offending Jews, a sort of "lynch mob" attitude.
and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them. These "honorable" leaders, whose duties are to keep order under these very types of circumstances, are swept along in a type of herd behavior. In a hysterical fury, these magistrates ripped the clothes off Paul and Silas and commanded that the apostles be beaten. What of Roman law? What of Roman justice? All concerns of law and justice are forgotten that these men of God may be made to suffer. This may be one of the incidents to which Paul later refers in 2 Corinthians 11:25.

23 And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely:

And when they had laid many stripes upon them: Without the process of law, but rather at the will of a few greedy men and through the ignorance of a racially driven mob, these godly men are beaten without mercy. The Jews are forbidden to inflict more than thirty-nine stripes, as more than that often kills the prisoner; but this rule is not so with the Romans. When Paul and Silas are beaten, no one is counting the stripes; they receive "many stripes."

It is easy for us to read of such a beating in the insulated surroundings of our civilized lifestyles and not appreciate what really happened. Think of being stripped of all clothing and tied to the whipping post; then, at the hands of one who is an expert in this type of torture, being beaten with a bundle of rods (canes) until the flesh gapes in inflamed welts, blood pours from the wounds, the body cries out in excruciating pain, while the jubilant mob jeers. Three times the Apostle Paul is constrained to suffer thus for his Lord, Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 11:25).

they cast them into prison: The public humiliation of the whipping does not end the punishment; Paul and Silas are now confined in prison.
charging the jailor to keep them safely: Why all the precautions in keeping Paul and Silas safely confined in the prison is difficult to understand as there certainly is no charge of violence against them; but it provides a grand opportunity for a demonstration of the power of God as will be seen in subsequent verses.

24 Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.

Who, having received such a charge: The jailor takes this charge most seriously. He does his best to contain Paul and Silas. (See verse 27 for additional information on the responsibility of a Roman jailor.)

thrust them into the inner prison: Paul's keepers do not trust minimum security to contain these prisoners; they are placed in maximum security. Paul and Silas are confined in the dungeon. "In a Roman prison, there were usually three distinct parts: (1) the communiora, or where the prisoners had light and fresh air; (2) the interiora, shut off by strong iron gates with bars and locks; and (3) the tullianium, or dungeon..." (Reese 448).

and made their feet fast in the stocks: To add to their misery, the apostles are placed in "stocks." The "stocks" are a wooden apparatus in which the feet are spread apart and locked into holes. This practice adds an element of torture to their confinement as they now have a very difficult time sitting up or lying down.

It may be assumed this pagan jailor is confident in the security of his charges, but he is about to see the power of God rock this prison to its foundation. Before morning's light, Paul will be this man's brother in Christ!
25 And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.

And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: It may have been the darkest hour of the night, but the darkness has not invaded the hearts of Paul and Silas. From their lips arise thanksgiving and praise to God.

and the prisoners heard them: This singing is bound to have been a different sound than is usually heard in a prison. Those who are also confined "listen attentively" (Vine, Vol. II 205) to these songs in the night.

26 And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.

And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: "Suddenly," in the midst of this pitiful scene, the God of the universe rocks the foundations of the prison with a "great earthquake" (see notes on 4:31).

and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed: Under the hand of God, the earth trembles, the prison doors came open, and the confining shackles fall off every prisoner.
27 And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.

The ensuing commotion awakes the jailor to what might be considered the nightmare of all Roman jailors. The prison is conspicuously open, and it may be assumed that all the prisoners have escaped. It is Roman law to hold the jailor responsible for the security of the prisoners. Here this desperate jailor draws his sword and is preparing to commit suicide rather than to face a Roman court that would sentence him to torture and then death (see notes on 12:19).

28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.

Exactly how Paul knows the jailor is about to take his own life is open to speculation, but Paul's care for souls and his compassion for his fellow man is obvious. In the nick of time, as the jailor prepares to die by the thrust of his own sword, the strong voice of Paul cries out; and the mind of the jailor is changed; he chooses life rather than death.

29 Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas,

This jailor is not unlike people of today. When things are going well for him, he has no interest in these men of God or their message of salvation. But now that he has suffered the type of calamity that literally brought him to the brink of eternity, suddenly he is interested in things of a spiritual nature.
30 And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

The jailor is not asking how to assure his personal safety, but rather he is concerned about his spiritual condition. He now knows these men are preachers of salvation.

The following steps are absolutely necessary for the salvation of a sinner:

1. Believe in Jesus Christ (John 8:24).
3. Confess that Jesus is the Son of God (Matthew 10:32).

It will be noted in the following verses that the jailor is instructed to "believe" (31), and then he is "baptized" (33). The question is often asked why are different instructions given to those who desire the same thing, to be saved? The explanation as to why there are different answers to the same question involves the fact the gospel preachers simply tell the candidate for salvation what he needs to do, taking into consideration his religious background and the requirements for salvation that he has already met. There is no one place where all the steps of salvation are mentioned. Notice the following answers given to those desiring salvation:

1. "Men and brethren, what shall we do" (2:37)?
   "Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins" (2:38).

2. "What doth hinder me to be baptized" (8:36)?
   "If thou believest ... thou mayest" (8:37).
   "... he baptized him" (8:38).
(3) “Sirs, what must I do to be saved” (16:30)?

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" (16:31).

He "was baptized" (16:33).

In the first example, the subjects for salvation are Jews, some of the same Jews who crucified Jesus. They are told to repent and they are baptized. There is no reason to tell them to believe as it is obvious they are believers; they interrupt Peter’s sermon with the question, "...what shall we do?" Peter does not tell them to confess that Jesus is the Son of God. It is the realization they have crucified the Son of God that makes them ask the question, "...what shall we do?"

In the second example, the candidate is a Jew who has traveled all the way to Jerusalem to worship God under the requirements of the Old Testament. He needs to believe in Jesus. Philip tells him to believe in Jesus (37). The Ethiopian makes the confession, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (37), and then he is baptized (38). Philip does not mention repentance since it is obvious that this man is ready to change his life.

In the third example, the subject for salvation is a pagan. He is told to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (31), and then he is baptized (33). It is obvious he has repented. He is washing the stripes of the apostles. We can also be assured that he confesses Jesus as the Son of God as this is what he is instructed to believe (31).
It should be noted that not every person is instructed to believe since they may already be believers. Not everyone is instructed to repent since they may have already repented. Not every one is told to confess that Jesus is the Son of God because they may have already confessed Jesus. But please notice, on every occasion of conversion in the book of Acts, the candidate for salvation is told to be baptized. Why is that? It is because baptism is the one requirement that none of them has fulfilled.

31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

The directions given to this jailor are to "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." For more complete information on the jailor's salvation, see notes on the verse above and notes on 10:43.

This is not a proof text for those who would baptize babies. The "household" here includes only those who are able to "believe"; this excludes infants.

32 And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.

It is here the disciples take advantage of the opportunity to give further instruction to both the jailor and those in "his house" who are able to understand and believe the "word of the Lord." These pagans need something to believe. They cannot believe in Jesus without first hearing about Him. There is no faith in Jesus where the word of God has not gone. "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).
And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.

Luke tells us that two things happen the "same hour of the night":

(1) The jailor shows he has repented by the new found compassion he demonstrates for Paul and Silas. He does what he can to relieve and comfort the disciples by "washing their stripes."

(2) "He and all his" are baptized. There is no waiting until the end of the month or the first of the week or until Sunday or even the next day to immerse these believers. In every act of conversion when the element of time is mentioned, the subject is baptized "the same hour of the night," immediately, straightway, forthwith (9:18; 8:38; 16:15,33). The reason for this urgency is because one's sins are not remitted until after he is baptized. Salvation does not come before baptism (2:38; Mark 16:16).

And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.

And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced:

What begins as a nightmare for this jailor ends up being the best day of his life. The prison doors once again are shut, all the prisoners are secure, and this jailor only a few hours earlier a heathen, is now a son of God. Truly all is well. He now attends to the needs of the disciples as he "rejoices" over his salvation. Obedience to the word of God produces joy in the heart of the obedient (8:8,39).
believing in God with all his house: There is no infant baptism here. All those who are baptized in this household are also believers.

35 And when it was day, the magistrates sent the serjeants, saying, Let those men go.

And when it was day: Apparently some of these "magistrates" are having second thoughts about their treatment of Paul and Silas. It is entirely possible they have lost some sleep over the matter because of the hasty actions taken against these men without a formal trial. It could have been because of the earthquake, or it may have been rumored that these men are Romans. Whatever the reason for their uneasy feelings about the matter, as soon as "it was day," they attempt to resolve the matter as quickly as possible by giving the order to "Let those men go."

the magistrates sent the serjeants, saying, Let those men go: The magistrates attempt to distance themselves from the apostles by sending their henchmen, "the serjeants," to give the orders for the disciples' release. By these men the "many stripes" had been laid on Paul and Silas the day before.

The word translated "serjeants" means, literally, "those having the rods, the lictors." These were the public officials who were in attendance wherever magistrates met to transact business. These men carried as symbols of their office bundles of rods, with an axe inserted among them, denoting the magistrates' right to inflict corporal and capital punishment (Reese 455).
36 And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, The magistrates have sent to let you go: now therefore depart, and go in peace.

The very fact that Paul and Silas are going to be released must have been a happy thought for this one-time pagan, now Christian jailor. He admonishes his new brothers in Christ to "go in peace." Little does he understand the character of Paul. These magistrates are soon to eat their portions of "humble pie."

37 But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out.

Paul will not allow these civil rulers to commit a flagrant breach of Roman justice without paying the consequences. How interesting! The accusers have now become the accused! Paul charges them with publicly beating and throwing into prison Roman citizens without a trial. These charges will strike fear into the hearts of these magistrates (verse 38). Paul demands that since they were punished openly, they must also be released openly. He calls for these Roman officials to come to the prison and personally escort him and Silas to freedom!

38 And the serjeants told these words unto the magistrates: and they feared, when they heard that they were Romans.

Paul's message is dutifully carried back to the magistrates, and they quickly learn their problem has not just left town. Instead, upon learning that Paul and Silas are Roman citizens, they fear the consequences the disciples might extract for their abuse. These men know they have
committed an illegal act; and that greater men than they have suffered drastic penalties for exactly what they have done.

The question is often raised, “Why do the disciples not declare their Roman citizenship before they are beaten as Paul does on another occasion (22:25-29)?” The answer is they probably do; but in the mob’s fury to inflict hurt on a couple of Jews and the magistrates’ desire to please public opinion, the information is either not heard or not listened to or the magistrates are not informed. One can believe these men take a little more time in ascertaining the facts before they beat the next hapless soul that falls into their jurisdiction.

39 And they came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city.

The "worm has certainly turned." These magistrates whose duty it is to keep the peace are now trapped by their own ineptitude. They have personally escorted the preachers out of the prison and now are literally begging the disciple’s pardon for the wrongs they have committed against them. The Amplified Bible says:

So they came themselves and -- striving to appease them due to the fact that Paul and Silas are Roman citizens the magistrates have no right to command or demand that they leave the city, but they asked them as a favor. Paul and Silas are going to honor the request to leave the city but they will do so after due deliberation thus avoiding all appearances of being ran out of town.
40 And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.

It must be concluded that Paul has accomplished his purpose in Philippi. The Lord's word has won another victory over the hearts of man. A staunch group of young Christians now compose the church at Philippi. But before leaving, Paul once again returns to the home of Lydia to partake of the hospitality of this godly woman and to comfort the brethren. Who needs comforting the most, the brethren or Paul and Silas?

There is something astounding about this. Those men who had been so shamefully treated, abused, beaten, illegally cast into prison, suffering the torture of stocks in the inner dungeon -- those men comforted the brethren! How noble, unselfish and beautiful is that scene in which men whose backs were still raw and bloody from the scourge are cast in the role of comforters for young Christians...

(Coffman 323).

It is also notable that Luke here begins to use the third person "they" in his narrative, thus indicating he does not leave Philippi with Paul and Silas. Bible evidence seems to indicate that Luke stays in Philippi until Paul’s return journey when once again Luke indicates he is in the company of Paul (20:5).
Chapter 17 is a continuation of Paul's second missionary journey. It includes stops at Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens. The most notable highlight is Paul's sermon to the Greek intellectuals on Mars' Hill in Athens.

1 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews:

Now when they: As has been previously noted (see notes on 16:40), the use of the third person pronoun "they" seems to indicate Luke is no longer in the company of Paul and Silas.

had passed through: The distance between Philippi and Thessalonica is approximately one hundred miles. This journey is divided into a three-day trip with overnight stays at Amphipolis and Apollonia.

Amphipolis: Following the famous Roman road, the Egnatian Way, the disciples cover the first thirty-three mile leg of their journey to Thessalonica, arriving in the city of Amphipolis. Amphipolis is the capital of the eastern province of Macedonia. It is a Roman military station situated in a bend of the Strymon River about three miles from the Aegean Sea.

and Apollonia: The following day the disciples continue another thirty miles down the Egnatian Way to the city of Apollonia. Little is known about the exact location of this city or of its contribution to history. The city is not in existence today.
they came to Thessalonica: After another journey of thirty-six miles on the great Roman highway, Paul and Silas arrive at what appears to be the object of their travel, the great city of Thessalonica.

Situated on a bay of the Aegean Sea, called the Thermaic Gulf, the city had for its original name Therma and was called Thessalonica after the sister of Alexander the Great. It was the metropolis of Macedonia and under the name of Saloniki is a "strategic Balkan metropolis" today; present population is about 200,000. ...from its position on the much used Roman road, the Via Egnatia, and as a port it was an important trade center ... (De Welt 230).

where was a synagogue of the Jews: Apparently, Paul went directly to the city of Thessalonica instead of stopping at the first two cities because there "was a synagogue of the Jews" in Thessalonica. Paul's reason for passing through these first cities should not be misunderstood. It is not that they did not need salvation. On the contrary, Paul realizes that by taking the gospel into a major city of commerce with a large Jewish population as well as a large number of Gentiles, the gospel can get a "jump start" and quickly begin to spread to surrounding areas (see additional notes on 6:9).

Vine defines "synagogue" as: “Sunagoge, properly a bringing together (sun, together, ago, to bring), denoted (a) a gathering of things, a collection, then, of persons, an assembling, of Jewish religious gatherings ...” (Vol. IV 100).
2 And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures,

And Paul, as his manner was: It is the modus operandi of the Apostle Paul to take advantage of the audience the synagogue provides to preach the gospel (see notes on 13:14; 14:1).

went in unto them, and three sabbath days: This phrase indicates the period of time Paul has the opportunity to preach in the synagogue. During the two weeks between the three Sabbaths, the disciples are very careful not to leave the impression that they preach for material gain. They work most likely at the job of tent making in order to support themselves. Paul later says, "...ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto to you the gospel" (1 Thessalonians 2:9).

Was Paul a Sabbatarian (see notes on 13:14)?

reasoned with them out of the scriptures: The scriptures used by Paul to convince these Jews are the prophetic passages from the Old Testament that foretell the coming of the promised Messiah. The Jews of the first century missed Jesus as Messiah for the very same reason the majority will miss Jesus as Savior once again, an ignorance of the scriptures!
Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.

Opening and alleging: Using the Old Testament, Paul preaches Jesus. "The word 'opening' means to explain or unfold the meaning. Paul unfolded the meaning of the scriptures to his audience. 'Alleging' means to lay down the proposition, or maintain that it must be so" (Reese 460).

that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ: The content of Paul's message is the same as used by Peter on Pentecost (2:22-37), by Philip in the conversion of the Ethiopian (8:30-38), and earlier by Paul at Pisidian Antioch (13:17-41). The sermon contains the basic elements of the suffering, death, burial, and glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ. May all modern soul winners take note: the "social gospel" of today does not save souls. It is Jesus who saves: we must preach Jesus! The above information must be the theme of all successful soul winners. What Old Testament passages Paul may have used is not indicated. He could and probably did use the following and others: Isaiah 53; Psalms 16:10).

4 And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.

And some of them believed: "Some" indicates few of the devout Jews are willing to accept the gospel. This rejection now seems to be the norm rather than the exception among the Jews. As in Antioch in Pisidia, these Jews judged themselves "unworthy of everlasting life" (13:46).

For a complete explanation of the part belief plays in salvation, see notes on Acts 10:43.
and consorted with Paul and Silas: Those "some" who accepted the gospel, "consorted with," literally "cast their lots," with Paul and Silas.

and of the devout Greeks a great multitude: A vast number of the interested Gentiles are obedient to the gospel.

and of the chief women not a few: Among the "multitude" of converts are many of the "chief women" (see notes on 13:50 for information on "chief women").

5 But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.

But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy: As is always the case when the gospel is preached, there are those who become believers, and sadly there are those who resist the word. In this case, these die-hard Jews are envious of the success of the Apostle Paul. In a space of about three weeks, the preaching of Christ has moved "a great multitude" to obedience.

took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar: These unbelievers of the synagogue are quick to retaliate against the disciples by gathering a mob of shiftless rabble to do their evil deeds. Barnes has the following to say about these "lewd fellows":


The forum, or market-place, was the place where the idle assembled, and where those were gathered together that wished to be employed, Mat. xx. 3. Many of these would be of abandoned character—the idle, the dissipated, and the worthless, and, therefore, just the materials for a mob (481).

and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people: This impromptu mob of social misfits descend upon the "house of Jason" in hopes of catching Paul and Silas. It appears the disciples are making their home with Jason (verse 7). It is also very probable this Jason is Paul's kinsman (Romans 16:21).

6 And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also;

And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city: Unable to find Paul and Silas, this mob, inspired by the jealousy of the Jews, seems to be willing to take their wrath out on Jason and other incidental brethren. The mob brings these brethren before "the rulers of the city."

The Greek word here is politarchs, which is not found anywhere in classical Greek literature; and, of course, there was a time when the radical critics were baying the moon about `Luke's error'; however, the excavation of one of the arches that led to the ancient city has exposed an old inscription which uses the very title Luke employed... Having been proven correct where all the evidence seemed to be against him, Luke's accuracy is again, as invariably, certified (Coffman 328).
crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also: What a dramatic charge these enemies of Christ make against Jason. "These that have turned the world upside down" are here! The disciples are accused of being guilty of insurrection against the Roman government.

One must remember the kingdom of Christ is a spiritual kingdom. Jesus says, "My kingdom is not to this world" (John 18:36). The Lord's church has no business involving herself in politics as has become the policy of the denominational world; their pulpits often are no more than political platforms. The only way the church of the New Testament is concerned about "turning the world upside down" is in a spiritual sense, by the preaching of the gospel.

7 Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus.

Whom Jason hath received: The charge is that this band of insurgents have been staying with Jason.

and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar: Understanding that treason against a Roman Caesar will not be tolerated but rather severely punished, the Jews deceitfully accuse the disciples of political transgression.

saying that there is another king, one Jesus: It can be assumed that these Jews understand perfectly that the kingdom of Jesus is a spiritual kingdom, but they are willing to misrepresent the teaching of Paul for their own benefit. There is a most important point that must be drawn from this verse: these preachers of the gospel are preaching the kingdom of Jesus is in existence now with King Jesus reigning!
Many have the mistaken notion that we must wait for the second coming of Jesus before He will establish His kingdom. The kingdom of Jesus is established during the lifetime of the apostles (Mark 9:1) in the city of Jerusalem on Pentecost day (2:36-47). One cannot have a kingdom without a king; thus, at the same time the kingdom (the church, Matthew 16:18-19) is established, Jesus begins to reign as king (see notes on 8:12). Jesus will reign in His kingdom as long as men are dying!

For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death (1 Corinthians 15:25-26).

8 And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things.

Although the charges brought against Jason and his associates are not minor enough to be ignored, it seems the evidence is scanty; and the best that can be charged is that they housed Paul and Silas.

9 And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the other, they let them go.

The authorities require that Jason and the others post a bond or "bail, either personal or by a deposit of money. A law term. They engaged that the public peace should not be violated, and the authors of the disturbance should leave the city" (Vincent 538). Because of this guarantee given by Jason, Paul and Silas have to leave the city. Paul later expresses a desire to return to Thessalonica but explains he cannot because "Satan hindered us" (1 Thessalonians 2:18).
10 And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews.

And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night: One can feel the urgency of getting Paul and Silas out of this hostile environment. They make their flight under the cover of darkness. In spite of the apparent retreat of the apostles, it should be remembered the seed has been planted; and now a church of Christ spreads its roots among the honest hearts of Thessalonica.

unto Berea: The city of Berea lies about fifty miles to the southwest of Thessalonica.

Conybeare and Howson give the following description of this one-time beautiful city:

Berea, like Edessa, is on the eastern slope of the Olympian range, and commands an extensive view of the plain which is watered by the Haliacmon and Axius. It has many natural advantages, and is now considered one of the most agreeable towns in Rumili. Plane-trees spread a grateful shade over its gardens. Streams of water are in every street. Its ancient name is said to have been derived from the abundance of its waters; and the name still survives in the modern Verria, or Kara-Verria (293).

who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews: The population of Berea is sufficient to have a synagogue; thus, as is the usual manner of Paul in beginning a work, he goes straight to this gathering place of the Jews. One must wonder if by now Paul has any trepidation about preaching in a new and strange location. If he does, it certainly does not show; he launches into the work at hand.
11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

Not only can it be said that the Bereans are more "noble" than those at Thessalonica in their reception of the word of God but also they leave a noble example for all true disciples today. The nobleness of the Bereans is in their readiness to receive and investigate, to study and search for themselves, whether the new teaching is or is not in accordance with the will of God. Sadly, there are many today who are ignorant of the truth because they are content to listen to some preacher and because he professes to be a teacher of God's will, they swallow what he is teaching without question as if he were dispensing "gospel pills." All who profess to be disciples of Christ should recognize the need to "search the scriptures daily" to see whether or not the things they are taught are from God. The salvation of our souls depends upon it.

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world (1 John 4:1).

12 Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.

**Therefore many of them believed:** Because the Bereans are willing to hear the word and study the scriptures, "many of them believed." Here is vivid evidence of the power of the word and proof of the doctrinal concept that the word produces faith. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). (For addition notes on the part belief plays in salvation, see 10:43).
also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few: Many of the leading members of society in Berea are converted to Jesus Christ. (For notes on "honourable women," see 13:50).

13 But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people.

One can be assured if the cause of Christ is enjoying some success, the devil is not far away ready to disrupt the progress. So it is here; the malicious spirited Jewish zealots pursue Paul from Thessalonica to Berea just as the hostile Jews of Iconium chased him to Lystra (14:19). Do you suppose, as Paul is being pursued by these enemies of Jesus, that he thinks of his own days as a pursuer of Christians. Paul surely must have remembered his own "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord" as he hurries down the Damascus road to bind and persecute any who are "of this way" (9:1-2).

14 And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea: but Silas and Timotheus abode there still.

And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul: The bonds produced by Christianity are quick and strong. Already these new brothers and sisters are concerned about Paul's safety. They risk drawing the ire of the Jews upon themselves by assisting Paul to escape. Some of these new converts accompany him all the way to Athens.

to go as it were to the sea: Some scholars try to read more into this phrase than is probably there. It is very likely that Plumptre is correct in the following statement:
The English version conveys the impression that the movement was a feint in order to baffle the pursuers. Many of the better MSS., however, give "as far as the sea," and this is probably the meaning ... (112).

**but Silas and Timotheus abode there still:** Silas and Timothy are left in the city of Berea while Paul makes about a seventeen-mile journey to the sea and then on to Athens.

15 And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens: and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timotheus for to come to him with all speed, they departed.

**And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens:** Paul does not travel alone from Berea to Athens, but several of the noble Bereans serve as his guides not just to the sea coast but all the way to Athens.

Hurlbut gives the following geographical description of the famous city of Athens:

Athens, one of the most famous cities of the ancient world, was situated five miles northeast of the Saronic Gulf, between the two little streams Cephissus and Ilissus, and connected by long walls with its two seaports, the Piraeus and the Phaleric Gulf, where probably Paul landed. Around it stand mountains noted in history, and within its walls rise four important hills: the Acropolis, surmounted by the Parthenon, the most perfect specimen of Greek architecture; the Areopagus, northwest of the Acropolis, where Paul delivered his memorable discourse; the Pnyz still farther west; and, on the south, the Museum. In Paul's time Athens was no longer the political capital, but was still the literary center, not only of Greece, but of the civilized world (119).
To appreciate fully the events that are about to transpire, it is necessary to understand the social and educational climate of the Athenians. McGarvey makes the following observations:

In the ancient world there were two distinct varieties of civilization, which had reached their culmination in the days of the apostles. One was the result of human philosophy; the other, of a divine revelation. The chief center of the former was the city of Athens; of the latter, the city of Jerusalem. If we compare them with respect either to the moral character of the peoples brought under their influence respectively, or with reference to their preparation for the perfect religion of Christ, we shall find the advantage in favor of the latter. Fifteen hundred years before, God had placed the Jews under the influence of revelation, and left the other nations of the earth to "walk in their own ways." By a severe discipline, continued through many centuries, the former had been lifted out of the idolatry in which they were sunk at the beginning, and which prevailed over all other nations. ... On the other hand, the most elegant of the heathen nations were now exhausting in their social life, as Paul testifies in the first chapter of his epistle to the Romans, the catalogue of base and beastly practices of which men and women can be guilty. In Athens itself, where flourished the most profound philosophy, the most glowing eloquence, the most exquisite poetry, and the most refined creative art which the world has ever seen, there was the most complete and studied abandonment to every vice which passion could prompt or imagination invent. ... The struggle now about to take place in Athens is to demonstrate still farther, by contrast, how successful a "schoolmaster to bring us to Christ" had been the law and the prophets. Paul knew well the reputation of Athens, but he could not have realized, until he saw it, the extent to which it was given to idolatry (Vol. II 117-119).
and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timotheus for to come to him with all speed, they departed: The Bereans who accompany Paul to Athens now return home with the urgent message to have Silas and Timothy join Paul as soon as possible.

16 Now while Paul waited for them in Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.

Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him: Paul is not at all impressed by the glory of idolatry the city of Athens literally lives and breathes; all Paul can see is the darkness of heathenism, its ignorance, and its utter shame. Paul's righteous indignation rises to the surface; his "spirit is stirred."

when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry: It is doubtful we can understand the degree to which idolatry consumed Athens. "Athens was wholly given to idolatry. It is said that Athens had more idols or images than all the rest of Greece. Pretonius satirically said it was easier to find a god than a man in Athens; Xenophon calls the city one great altar, one great offering to the gods" (Boles 276).

17 Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him.

As is the custom with Paul, he begins his preaching in the city of Athens by disputing (reasoning ASV) first with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles and then with the Gentiles, in this case the pagan Greeks.
Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.

Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him: It was inevitable that Paul would eventually encounter some of the famous "philosophers" of Athens. The Epicureans and Stoicks are the most popular of the many philosophers found in the city.

"Epicureans" got their name from their master teacher one Epicurus who lived from 342-270 B.C. The followers of Epicurus were known as the school of the garden because it was in a garden that Epicurus did his teaching. Basically they were atheists, giving God no credit for the creation of the world and having no belief in the eternal existence of man. "Thus their view of the soul was materialistic. At death it was dissolved and dissipated in the elements thus ending forever the existence of man. Life, therefore, was not regulated by higher moral or spiritual interests; its highest aim was gratification:..." (Lenski 712).

"Stoicks" are disciples of the master teacher Zeno who lived from 340 to 265 B.C. The name Stoick is derived from stoa, a porch. "Zeno, ... held his school in the Stoa Poecile, or painted portico, so called because it was adorned with pictures by the best masters" (Vincent 539). The basic belief of the Stoicks is that God is in everything.
God was merely the Spirit of Reason of the universe; matter was inseparable from this deity, and he was conceived as impressing order and law upon it since he regulated it as an inner principle. The soul was corporeal, at death it was burnt or absorbed by God. ... pleasure was no good, pain no evil; reason was guide and decided what was good and what was evil. He who followed reason was perfect and sufficient in himself. When reason saw no more in life, it dictated suicide as the most reasonable thing. Its first two leaders died by their own hand, ... Stoicism was the philosophy of human pride” (Lenski 713).

To sum up the differences in these two philosophies, it can be said the Epicureans believe in no God (atheism) while the Stoics believe everything is God (pantheism).

... the Epicureans believed that the highest good from life could only be secured in pleasure. ... The Stoics on the other hand held that the highest good could be found in a complete self-discipline amounting to the denial of the natural and necessary desires of man. One philosophy produced degenerates, the other suicides (De Welt 238).

It is plain that the godless, humanistic, fatalistic philosophies of the Greeks are in stark opposition to the "good news of Jesus Christ." The resurrection of Jesus, the immortality of the human soul, and the recognition of God as Creator and Ruler of the universe stand in direct contradiction to these pagan philosophies. This is but a short introduction of what the Apostle Paul has to deal with. This range of human reasoning is not unlike some of the ludicrous reasoning that one encounters when he attempts to teach the word of God to the liberal, atheistic, pseudo-intellectual, pseudo-scientific, humanistic, psycho-babblers of today. The students of Zeno and Epicurus are alive and well.
And some said, What will this babbler say: One can almost feel the contempt these arrogant intellectuals have for the Apostle Paul. They refer to him by the insulting term of "babbler." Vincent defines this term as: “Lit., seed-picker: a bird which picks up seeds in the streets and markets; hence one who picks up and retails scraps of news” (539-540).

other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods because he preached unto them Jesus: Paul's proclamation of Jesus is considered by the Athenians as the declaration of a "strange" or "foreign" god because Jesus is not known by them.

and the resurrection: The idea of a "resurrection" truly must have been "foreign" to these "live for the day for tomorrow we die" Stoicks and Epicureans.

19 And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is?

And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying: According to Coffman, the term "Areopagus" "may stand either for the Hill of Mars, simply as a locality, or for the Court which sat there, the oldest and most revered tribunal in Athens" (336).

May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is: Always ready to hear "some new thing" (verse 21), these curiosity seekers request Paul to speak.

20 For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean.

21 (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.)
One can easily see the mindset of Paul’s audience. They are interested only in some novel philosophy of which they have never heard. This will be a difficult group to teach the gospel of Christ. They think they already know everything, and they are too intelligent for the gospel. This sounds like some of our modern humanistic intellectuals.

22 Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars’ hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.

Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill: Vincent has the following to say about "Mars' hill":

The Hill of Mars: the seat of the ancient and venerable Athenian court which decided the most solemn questions connected with religion. Socrates was arraigned and condemned here on the charge of innovating on the state religion. It received its name from the legend of the trial of Mars for the murder of the son of Neptune. The judges sat in the open air upon seats hewn out in the rock, on a platform ascended by a flight of stone steps immediately from the market-place.... No place in Athens was so suitable for a discourse upon the mysteries of religion (540).

And said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious: The words "too superstitious" are perhaps better understood to mean "very religious" as they are translated in the American Standard Version. This comment by Paul cannot be perceived to be either a compliment or a rebuke but rather a means of gaining the attention of his audience.
23 For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.

For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD: In this city of more than three thousand idols, shrines, temples, and other assorted objects of worship, the Athenians make one last-ditch effort to appease all the "gods" by having one last altar to the "UNKNOWN GOD" in case they have missed anyone! The religious condition of these people is made clear by this observation by Lenski: "By erecting this strange altar and by the worship connected with it the Athenians were worshipping something about which they knew nothing whatever" (724).

Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you: What a great opening for a gospel sermon! The inspired genius of Paul takes hold of the opportunity and wastes no time in revealing this "UNKNOWN GOD" whom they "ignorantly" worship as being Jehovah, THE GOD of the universe.

24 God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;

God that made the world and all things therein: Here begins a great sermon that will quickly show the majesty of Almighty God as Creator and Benefactor in comparison to dead idols composed of "gold or silver or stone" (verse 29).
seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands:
Paul quickly contrasts the differences between the heathen idols of their religious imaginations and makes it clear that the God of the Universe is not to be found living in the multiplicity of temples they have been so careful to construct.

25 Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;

Paul continues his revelation of God Almighty by asserting that God is not dependent upon man for anything, but rather the reverse is the case: man depends on God for "all things," including his next "breath." Without reservation the God of Creation owns it all:

I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he goats out of thy folds. For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof (Psalm 50:9-12).

26 And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;

And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth:
From the original man Adam and his wife Eve sprang the entire human race. Regardless of the superior attitudes and snobbish prejudice held by these Greek scholars, the same blood that flows in their veins also flows in the veins of every other human being. The brotherhood of humanity is declared, and we dare not forget this same principle is true today (10:34-35).
and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation: At first glance one might be satisfied to read into this statement simply the fact that God has determined the seasons and has limited the areas of the existence for man; but, upon a closer look we can see that much more is involved. These words indicate a much larger grand scheme in which all should find consolation. This earth does not fly through space without rhyme or reason; it is not left to the quirks of happenstance but rather God is in control. God’s hand has been and forever will be in the affairs of men.

And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings...

(Daniel 2:21).

27 That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us:

That they should seek the Lord: The supreme purpose of God is for man to seek after Him. For this reason He has orchestrated the affairs of nations and countries that in some way man might be compelled to "seek the Lord."

The purpose of God’s exalting some races or nations for a season, and then debasing them and raising up others, is revealed as a device for bringing them to faith in God. Repeatedly throughout history, nations in the ascendancy forgot God and turned their backs upon his word; whereupon God cast them down and raised up others. We may only pray that America heeds this fact before it is too late (Coffman 339).
if haply they might feel after him, and find him: God does not want to remain the "UNKNOWN GOD" in the minds of these Greeks or in the mind of any man. The words "feel after" express strictly the act of groping in the dark. The subjects in Paul's audience have been doing just that, but now they have the chance to come to the light.

though he be not far from every one of us: The availability of God is set forth by this statement. It is a wonderful concept to know that God loves every human being to the extent that "He gave His only begotten Son" that man might be saved (John 3:16). "God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). The only problem is a vast number of men are not willing to repent. Here is an everlasting tragedy: God is ready and able to save, and man rejects salvation.

Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear (Isaiah 59:1-2).

28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.

For in him we live, and move, and have our being: Paul begins to close his sermon with what might be considered a summary. Man depends upon God for his very existence. This conclusion must have flown into the face of both the Epicurean and Stoick scholars who both embrace the basic philosophy that man and not God is the ruler of life.

as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring: When Paul quotes the heathen poets, it is probably a shock to his audience. They perceive him to be an illiterate Jew, but the amazing apostle shows himself to be a man of culture and education.
Paul here quotes one of their poets; his quotation is from Aratus of Soli in Cilicia; he lived about 270 B.C., and was a Stoic philosopher. Cleanthes, a Stoic philosopher, who lived 300 to 220 B.C. has the same words in his "Hymn to Zeus" (Boles 282).

Lenski further explains the quotation: “In his famous hymn to Zeus, he (Cleanthes) identifies himself with the whole human race and even all mortal beings that live and crawl on earth and declares: ‘for from him we are offspring’” (733).

29 Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.

This inspired logic from the Apostle Paul strikes directly at the idols of Athens. The reasoning must have been painfully obvious to these scholars. There is a basic rule of science that says life comes only from that which is alive. Thus, it follows since we, living, breathing, human beings are the "offspring of God," the God who created us must also be alive! This is in direct opposition to the cold, dead gods of the Athenians, those made of "gold, silver or stone" as crafted by men. The secondary thought that should have occurred to these idolators is this: is not the creator greater than that which is created? How is it possible for a man to create his own supreme being?

30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent:

And the times of this ignorance God winked at: This is a similar statement to the one the apostle gives to the pagans at Lystra (see notes on 14:16). There was a period of time, when God gave no written revelation to the Gentiles. During this time, He "suffered all the nations to walk in their own way." He "winked at" or "overlooked" (ASV) the sins of the Gentiles.
**but now commandeth all men every where to repent:** "Overlooking the ignorance of the pagans" is no longer the policy of God. In the clearest language available, Paul sets forth the indelible conclusion that "ALL MEN EVERY WHERE" must now "repent" and submit to the true knowledge of God that is now available.

One should note Paul does not teach the false concept of salvation by "faith only."
Rather ... "he used 'repent' in exactly the same manner as he often used 'believe' that is, as a synecdoche for all of the things required of the alien sinner, namely, faith, repentance and baptism" (Coffman 340).

The reader will find more information on the need for repentance in the notes on Acts 2:38 and 3:19.

31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

**Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world:** Judgment day--what a strange concept this must have been to these Stoicks and Epicureans who live only for the humanistic lust of the moment! The day here referred to is the final judgment of all humanity "small and great." The fact of the "JUDGMENT DAY" should be strong motivation for "ALL MEN EVERY WHERE" to "REPENT."
There are at least two possibilities as to the meaning of "appointed a day." Coffman says:

> The fact of the judgment's being scheduled for a day already "appointed" suggests that God has a timetable for the accomplishment of all things intended by his providing salvation for men. If this is the case, it will occur on time, exactly as scheduled... (341).

Reese offers a second possibility:

> Appointed a day may mean no more than that God has absolutely determined that there will be a judgment day. In the light of 2 Peter 3:12, whether the actual day has been set, or whether it is flexible, is a moot point (474).

**in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained:** The judgment of a righteous God will be righteous. It will be a judgment that all men will acknowledge as just. Here is the first attempt Paul makes to introduce Jesus to this crowd. Jesus, the "man whom he hath ordained" (appointed) is to be the judge (Matthew 25:31-33; Romans 2:16).

**whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead:** The logic follows, as surely as God raised Jesus from the dead, He has also appointed Him as the righteous judge.

> 32 And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter.
It is impossible for us to imagine the mental condition of Paul's audience by now. Their precious idols have been exposed as mere gold, silver, and stone. Their live-for-the-moment humanism has been threatened with a "day of accounting." Now their religious senses are again assaulted with the notion of a "resurrection of the dead." This is too much for these egotistical, would-be theologians. They have had enough of these barbs to their beliefs for one day. Some begin to "mock" while others are satisfied to take the "Felix" approach, postpone learning the truth of God (24:25). McGarvey holds out this hope for some of these Athenians:

Still, those who said, “We will hear thee concerning this yet again,” began, perhaps, to feel a rekindling of their better instincts; and let us hope that some of these may yet be found among the sons of light (Vol. II 131).

33 So Paul departed from among them.

Thus, Paul's sermon ends on this note. These idolators are willing to listen as Paul illustrates the folly of their idols, but they will not accept the teaching that would lift the gloom that shrouds their belief that man's destiny ends at the grave. Perhaps the thoughts of a resurrection and judgment day are taking their toll upon the previously anesthetized consciences of these men. "The wicked man must be made afraid to continue in sin, before the goodness of God can lead him to repentance..." (McGarvey, Vol. II 129). The fear of judgment and eternal punishment should not be the primary motivation for obedience to the gospel; but the preacher who does not, on occasion, reveal the judgment scene and swing the souls of his audience over the pits of hell so they can feel the heat and smell the sulphur is preaching a toothless gospel and has not declared “... all the counsel of God" (20:27).
34 Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: The efforts of Paul are not totally fruitless. There are those whose hearts are touched by the gospel.

among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite: Only two of Paul's converts receive special mention. The first is Dionysius, whose title ("the Areopagite") indicates he is one of the judges of the Areopagus and as such a man of high official standing in Athens.

and a woman named Damaris: Nothing more is revealed about this woman in divine writ. It is pure speculation to advance any theories as to how she happens to be in Paul's audience. But it can be said, without contradiction, Jesus Christ did more to elevate women to their proper status in life than anyone who ever lived or shall live, including all the modern efforts of "woman's liberation."

and others with them: Unnamed "others" also submit their lives to the gospel. There is some discussion as to whether or not a church is established at Athens. The general consensus is that a church is established. "History says that the church in Athens was one of the strongest congregations of the empire in the second and third centuries" (De Welt 243).
How many converts there are at Athens we do not know. It seems obvious the results are small in number compared to the three thousand of chapter two or the five thousand of chapter four. The results could not even be described as "many" or a "multitude." Luke simply says, "certain men clave unto him, and believed." What do we suppose is wrong with Paul's efforts at Athens? Is the problem the preacher? Preachers can have their off days. This is not the case here: Paul is a great preacher, and besides that he is led by the inspiration of God. Is the problem the sermon? Note the elements of Paul's sermon:

1. God is declared as Creator and Sustainer of the world.
2. A Savior is revealed, who is "not far from every one of us."
3. Paul calls for "all men everywhere to repent."
4. The reality of resurrection and judgment is made known.

What a great sermon! The sermon is not the problem. Dear reader, the problem and reason for the few conversions are the audience! Paul is faced with a group of curiosity seekers who are interested in hearing "some new doctrine" (verse 19). This audience is of the same ilk that could lie around all day and debate the number of angels who might stand on the head of a pin.

This type of audience is quite common in modern times. The gospel preacher of today should take heart in this episode in Paul's life. Preach the pure gospel without fear or favor. Be prepared and preach to the very best of your ability. If the results are sometimes discouraging, the problem is not the preacher, not the message, but the audience.
In this chapter Paul makes the acquaintance of Aquila and Priscilla, who are to become his longtime friends. Paul is to have a great work in the wicked city of Corinth; but, as might be expected, he will be opposed by the "insurrection" made against him by the Jews. This chapter also brings to a close Paul's second missionary journey and begins the third.

1 After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth;

After these things: After the events that transpired in Athens, it is evident that Paul does not spend an extended amount of time there but rather moves on to Corinth. The apparent reason is the intellectual arrogance of the humanistic philosophers whose minds are so filled with their own wisdom there is no place for the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:21).

Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth: The city of Corinth lies about forty miles southwest of Athens. It could be reached "by land along the Isthmus of Corinth, or by sea from the Piraeus to Cenchreae" (Plumptre 120). How Paul travels to Corinth is not revealed.

Bruce gives the following history of the tumultuous past of Corinth:

In 146 B.C., in savage vengeance for an anti-Roman revolt, Corinth was levelled to the ground by the Roman general L. Mummius, and the site lay derelict for exactly a century. In 46 B.C. the city was refounded by Julius Caesar and given the status of a Roman colony ... in 27 B.C. it became the capital of the Roman province of Achaia. Corinth was not long in regaining her old commercial prosperity, and therewith she
regained a reputation which she had had in earlier days for a degree of sexual licence remarkable even in classical antiquity. The difficulty which even Christians had in resisting the influence of this particular Corinthian characteristic is plain to readers of Paul's Epistles to the Corinthians (367).

Because of Corinth’s strategic location on a narrow isthmus between the Saronic and Corinthian gulfs, the city was ideally situated for trade and commerce. As a result of her prosperity, Corinth became a rich city, noted for affluency and excessive immoral indulgences. "...the city’s morals were the scandal of ancient times. The Greek language made a verb out of the city's name, 'Corinthianize' meaning to practice whoredom" (Coffman 348). Take heart, modern soul winner, it is in this most unlikely environment that the transforming power of the gospel becomes evident in the lives of sensual men; and the Lord's church arises to become a mighty influence in this city of debauchery!

2 And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them.

And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla: There is considerable speculation as to whether Aquila and Priscilla are Christians when Paul first meets them or if they later become disciples. It is possible these two could have been converted on the day of Pentecost as there were those from Pontus present (2:9-47). Perhaps they were baptized by Paul in Corinth. The fact of the matter remains: we do not know, and Luke is silent about their conversion. For certain this man and his wife are faithful helpers of Paul [even to the point of saving his life (Romans 16:3-4)] and loyal supporters of the gospel. They will be mentioned time and again throughout Luke's record for their good works.
3 And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers.

And because he was of the same craft: Paul has not only been educated in the academic arts of the day; but, as is the Jewish custom, he is taught a trade. "It was a Rabbinical principle that whoever does not teach his son a trade is as if he brought him up to be a robber" (Vincent 547).

he abode with them, and wrought: Paul takes up residency with Aquila and Priscilla and works with them. Paul demonstrates he is not allergic to manual labor when the necessity is there. For his own needs and to remove any suspicions about his motives for preaching, Paul works to provide for himself (1 Corinthians 4:12-16).

for by their occupation they were tentmakers: Aquila, Priscilla, and Paul are makers of tents used by shepherds and travelers. Often these tents are made of a rough cloth woven from goat's hair or a more deluxe version is crafted out of leather.
4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.

As is Paul's practice, he meets where the Jews gather on the sabbath day (for more information, see notes on 13:14). Paul always endeavors to take the gospel to "the Jew first," but he will be quick to learn that the Jews of Corinth do not want the gospel, as Luke notes in the next two verses.

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.

And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia: It is at this point in Paul's work that Silas and Timothy return from their efforts with the churches in Macedonia. Timothy brings good news of Paul's "brethren beloved" in Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 1:1-4). The good news brought by Timothy causes Paul to write the first Thessalonian letter. "...the letter which he sent them is the first of his Epistles which has been preserved to us" (Conybeare and Howson 340).

Paul was pressed in the spirit: The coming of Paul's companions seems to have stimulated him to press the Jews for a decision concerning Jesus as "the Christ" the Messiah. The term "pressed in the spirit" gives us the understanding that Paul "was constrained by the word, R.V., i.e., Paul felt the urge of the word of his testimony to the Jews in Corinth" (Vine, Vol. III 208).
and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ: In Paul's fresh zeal for preaching the gospel, he strikes at a major problem for the Jews, that being Jesus as the Messiah predicted by the Old Testament prophets. For the Jewish nation to accept Jesus as "the Christ" is also to accept the guilt and responsibility for killing the "Messiah." This concept is a major stumbling block to the Jews of Paul's day and remains so today.

6 And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.

And when they opposed themselves: The Corinthian Jews will not accept the teaching of Paul; they array themselves in opposition to the gospel. As Coffman notes, "All opposition against the word of God is in reality a disaster to the opposer, not to the gospel" (350).

The proposition of confessing Jesus as the Christ is one with which all men must deal sooner or later. One can accept Jesus and own Him as Savior now, or he can put off the decision and confess Him in judgment after it is too late. “And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:11). (See also Romans 14:11.)

and blasphemed: It never ceases to amaze this writer at the reception often given the gospel by those who are unbelievers. Here Paul preaches the "unsearchable riches of Christ," and sinful man "blasphemed." There is nothing that can inspire more spite, rage, envy, jealousy, and any other hateful responses in the hearts of rebellious men than the pure gospel of Christ. But as Hervey so eloquently says:
The Church meanwhile pursues her unwavering course. She holds in her hand the lamp of that truth which she did not invent, but which she received from God. That lamp sheds forth its heavenly light, whether men receive it or whether they shut it out from their hearts and walk on in darkness (96).

**he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean:** Woe be unto those who will reject the call of the gospel. They may not get a second opportunity.

By shaking off the dust from their feet, Jesus’ disciples testify to those who will not receive them that they are to be considered as heathen and that the disciples have fulfilled their responsibility toward them and are free from their blood (Johnson 209).

(See notes on 13:51.)

**from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles:** Again, as happens in Pisidian Antioch (13:46), Paul is no longer willing to “cast pearls before swine,” and turns his efforts to the Gentiles.

7 And he departed thence, and entered into a certain man’s house, named Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue.

**And he departed thence, and entered into a certain man’s house, named Justus:** Upon rejection by the Jews, Paul moves his public teaching to the house of Justus. Nothing is known of Justus with the exception of what is revealed here. Most scholars think he is a well-to-do Roman citizen since the name "Justus" is of Latin origin. Some manuscripts render the name of this good Gentile as "Titus Justus."
one that worshipped God: Justus is a "God-fearer," a "proselyte of the gate," as is the righteous Gentile Cornelius. Little does he know that the salvation of Jesus Christ has come to his house (see notes on 10:2).

whose house joined hard to the synagogue: As God will have it, the house of Justus is in immediate proximity to the synagogue, thus those desiring to hear Paul can conveniently continue to do so.

8 And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized

And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue: Here is a man of certain integrity. In the face of hostile Jews, Crispus, a "chief ruler in the synagogue," steps out in obedience to the gospel of Christ. He is one of the "not many of the mighty or noble" (1 Corinthians 1:26) who did accept the calling of Jesus. Crispus also has the distinction of being personally baptized by Paul (1 Corinthians 1:14).

believed on the Lord with all his house: Crispus and his family obey the gospel. As is always the case, "believed" includes complete obedience to each step of the gospel plan (see notes on 10:43).

and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized: The power of the gospel is being felt on the people of pagan Corinth. The Jewish synagogue has suffered a major blow in the loss of a prominent Gentile (Justus) and one of their leaders (Crispus). "Many believed and were baptized." Plumptre says, "The tense of the two verbs implies a process going on daily for an undefined period" (122).
Here, again, we have an abbreviation of the gospel plan for salvation, which, in addition to belief and baptism, also includes the necessity of repentance and a confession of Jesus as God's son. This is the only plan for salvation. Without obedience to these steps, there is no conversion in the New Testament (see notes on 2:38; 8:36-37).

9 Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace:

The Lord repeatedly gives Paul instructions, strength, and encouragement through supernatural communication in the form of a "vision" (see 16:9; 23:11; 27:23). Today we do not have this means of supernatural instruction, but we still depend upon God's providential guidance to open doors of opportunity for the gospel.

10 For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.

For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: When comfort is needed in the face of turmoil, the Lord repeats His assurance, "I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20). This promise does not deal with just the physical safety of Paul but rather to the fact that his efforts to preach the gospel at Corinth will be unstoppable by the opposition of any man.

for I have much people in this city: Paul is encouraged to continue to preach because the Lord knows there are many unbelievers, even idolaters in Corinth, who, if given the chance, will obey the gospel.
There are those who would latch on to this passage in hopes of proving the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. The argument is that there are still those whom God has elected (arbitrarily chosen) to save in Corinth. This passage does not prove this false doctrine, but rather the language simple tells us that through the omniscience of God He knows that even in the wickedness of Corinth there are honest souls who yearn for deliverance.

11 And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

This "year and six months" is the longest time Paul has yet stayed in one city. There is some discussion as to whether this is the entire time Paul spends in Corinth or if this time is extended yet many days as can be understood from verse 18.

McGarvey makes the following observation about the word "teaching":

... the word "teaching," which describes his work, shows that during this long period he was executing chiefly the second part of the apostolic commission, "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt. xxviii. 20). From this we can see that, notwithstanding the many disorders which were afterward found in the Corinthian church, it was probably the best taught of all the churches thus far planted by Paul (Vol. II 138-139).
12 And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat,

And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia: It seems that no sooner has Gallio taken office than the Jews, who for some reason have been waiting for a change in the deputy, launch an attack against Paul. From the history of the character and disposition of Gallio, this is not to be the deputy the Jews would have preferred.

In this instance the Jews have to deal with a man far different from the praetors of Philippi, or the politarchs of Thessalonia. Gallio is brother of Seneca, the famous Roman moralist, who speaks of him as a man of admirable integrity, amiable and popular (McGarvey, Vol. II 139).

Achacia "was one of the two provinces, of which Macedonia was the other, into which the Romans divided Greece (140 B.C.)" (Unger 16).

the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat: It seems as if Paul has been almost holding his breath in anticipation of what does finally begin. As has happened almost everywhere else--Philippi, Antioch, etc.--the Jews rise in "one accord against Paul." Paul is taken before Gallio for judgment.
13 Saying, This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law.

There are those who think the charge "contrary to the law" indicates Paul is preaching against the laws of the Roman government. If Paul had been preaching a new religion not recognized by Rome, he would have been preaching contrary to Roman law. Other scholars believe "the law" is a reference to the Old Testament law. It is the conclusion of this writer that the "law" under consideration is the Old Testament law. That also seems to have been the understanding of Gallio as he is recorded saying in verse 15, "If it be a question ... of your law."

14 And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you:
15 But if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters.
16 And he drave them from the judgment seat.

Gallio shows himself to be a man able to make a quick decision and to have just cause for his reasoning. It is obvious he does not understand the charges against Paul, but it is just as obvious he does not care about becoming involved in what he appraises as a religious quarrel about "words" and "names." Gallio reasons that if the charges deal with a crime against society ("a matter of wrong") or some gross immorality ("wicked lewdness"), then he would have been willing to make a judgment. The charges are summarily dismissed, and the Jews are driven out.
17 Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none of those things.

Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him: In this one rare event, the Jews suffer a severe reversal in their agenda. The pain is compounded, at least for Sosthenes, when what appears to be the "underdog effect" prevails, and the Greek onlookers promptly vindicate the Apostle Paul by beating Sosthenes. It is very possible the beating did Sosthenes a great deal of good. This Sosthenes is quite possibly the same Sosthenes whom Paul refers to in 1 Corinthians 1:1 as "our brother!"

**before the judgment seat:** Here is a prime example of speedy justice for all to see. The Judgment seat, the chair of state in which the proconsul sat, was not erected inside of a court room, as with us, but in the open air, and usually in the agora, or forum. Consequently, all trials which excited public interest were witnessed by a crowd of spectators made up largely of the idlers on the street. These are the only parties who could have been tempted to thus lay hands on Sosthenes, who, as the leader of the Jews, had preferred the charge against Paul (McGarvey, Vol. II 140).

**And Gallio cared for none of those things:** Gallio, as a politician, knows he cannot go wrong with the majority if he rules against the hated Jews. As for Sosthenes, we can be assured Gallio loses no sleep over the fact that this Jewish "pain in his neck" suffers a whipping.
18 And Paul after this tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn his head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow.

And Paul after this tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren: The fact that Paul is allowed to choose the time in which he will depart from Corinth, instead of having to run for his life, must have been a refreshing change for him. Because of the ruling of Gallio, it appears Paul is able to preach the gospel without hindrance until he chooses to leave. The term "yet a good while" indicates the remainder of days that are a part of the "year and six months" (verse 11) that Paul labors in Corinth.

and sailed thence into Syria: Paul and company leave Macedonia and set sail for Syria. This route will bring Paul full circle on his second missionary effort when he arrives back in Antioch.

and with him Priscilla and Aquila: As we will soon see, Paul’s faithful supporters, Priscilla and Aquila, journey with him as far as Ephesus.

having shorn his head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow:
There is much discussion among scholars as to the exact meaning of this passage. Without getting off into much mere speculation, we will attempt to provide some thoughts for the reader in hopes of shedding some light on this thorny statement.
It is generally understood that the grammatical construction of the original Greek could indicate that it is Aquila who has "shorn his head" because of the vow. This conclusion does not seem to be the context of the verse. Paul is the subject under consideration. We conclude the vow is taken by Paul. With this understanding, we will attempt to discover what kind of vow this is and what is involved in keeping it?

Is this a Nazarite vow? A Nazarite vow was a solemn promise made by an individual to consecrate his life to God for a specified period of time, usually thirty, sixty, or one hundred days. Some parents dedicate the entire life of their child to the vow of the Nazarite before they are born, as with Samson (Judges 13:5) and Samuel (1 Samuel 1:11). Unger provides the following information:

The Nazarite, during the term of his consecration, was bound to abstain from wine, grapes with every production of the vine, and from every kind of intoxicating drink. He was forbidden to cut the hair of his head, or to approach any dead body, even that of his nearest relation. If a Nazarite incurred defilement by accidentally touching a dead body, he had to undergo certain rites of purification, and to recommence the full period of his consecration... When the period of his vow was fulfilled he was released therefrom, and was required to offer a ewe lamb for a burnt offering, a ewe lamb for a sin offering, and a ram for a peace offering, ... He was to cut off the hair of "the head of his separation" (i.e., the hair which had grown during the period of his consecration) at the door of the tabernacle, and to put it into the fire under the sacrifice on the altar (780).

Understanding what the Nazarite vow required and also realizing the teaching of the New Testament, it would have been a contradiction in Paul’s life and teaching to bind himself to an Old Testament vow that would have:
1. Prevented him from observing the Lord's supper for at least 30 days. He could not
drink grape juice (Numbers 6:3).
2. Cause him to recognize an animal as a sin offering rather than Jesus as our sacrifice
for sin (Numbers 6:10-12).

The conclusion seems clear that this vow Paul has taken is not a Nazarite vow. There are
other types of vows that are based on the concept of a Nazarite vow that will not violate New
Testament teaching. Reese says:

Some think it was a vow of promise. While at Corinth, Paul promised (vowed) to do
something. This having been done, the vow was completed at Cenchrea. (2) Others
think it was a vow of gratitude. The vow was made out of gratitude for deliverance by
God from a dangerous situation (487).

It is the conclusion of this writer that the vow under consideration involves a solemn promise
that Paul has made to God. In imitating the Nazarite vow, he signifies his dedication to the
vow by allowing his hair to grow. Upon conclusion of the vow, Paul resumes the customary
cutting of his hair.

It is not out of keeping with the New Testament for a Christian to make a vow to God. When
one makes such solemn promises to God, he must keep his promise. As the wise man says,
"Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay"
(Ecclesiastes 5:5).
19 And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews.

And he came to Ephesus: This being the first mention of the celebrated city of Ephesus it deserves a short note on its geography and history. The city was due east of Cenchrea across the Aegean Sea. Ephesus was originally a Greek colony on the western coast of Asia Minor. It later became the capital of the Roman province of Asia. Ephesus was known for the worship of Diana, which was the source of much wickedness and debauchery among her worshipers. The Temple of Diana is considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

and left them there: Paul is in a hurry to get to Jerusalem (verse 21); therefore, he leaves Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus in anticipation of his return.

but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews: As is the custom of Paul, he seeks out the gathering place of the Jews, the synagogue, and enters in to "reason" with them.

20 When they desired him to tarry longer time with them, he consented not; 21 But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus.

When they desired him to tarry longer time with them, he consented not; But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem: Things seem to be going better for Paul in his efforts to preach the gospel. He gets to leave Ephesus at his own leisure now, instead of being run out of the synagogue, as usually is the case; he is prevailed upon to "tarry longer."
Paul has a strong desire to be at the “feast” to be observed in Jerusalem. These feasts are of great religious significance to the Jews as well as an opportunity for a reunion of friends and family from literally all over the world. Paul’s motivation for being there must have been the latter as we know he is not concerned with this Old Testament observation from a religious standpoint. The feast under consideration is generally agreed to be the Feast of Pentecost.

**but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus:** McGarvey supplies the follow summary for the preceding three verses:

Having fixed on Ephesus as his next point of attack, he feels the pulse, as it were, of the Jews there, by a few remarks in the synagogue; and finding it to be favorable, he leaves Pricilla and Aquila there for the evident purpose of preparing the ground as well as they can, and of being there when he returns, to help him as they had done in Corinth; then promising to return, he hurries on (Vol. II 144).

22 And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up, and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch.

**And when he had landed at Caesarea:** Luke gives no information on this apparently uneventful trip from Ephesus to Caesarea (for notes on Caesarea, see 9:30).

**and gone up, and saluted the church:** The trip from Caesarea to Jerusalem is correctly described geographically as “going up.” The elevation at Jerusalem is much higher than is the elevation at Caesarea. What Paul does in Jerusalem is not related by Luke; he simply says Paul “saluted the church.” We can understand that Paul greets the brethren, and we can be sure he updates them on the successes and failures of his latest journey.
he went down to Antioch: "Down" is also geographically correct in a description of the trip from Jerusalem to Antioch, as Antioch is lower in elevation than Jerusalem.

With Paul's return to Antioch of Syria, the church that originally sponsors this missionary effort, he completes the second missionary journey. Following is a summary of this trip:

1. Paul revisits the churches of south Galatia, Lystra, and Derbe.
2. At Troas Paul receives the "Macedonian call" and goes over into Greece.
3. At Philippi Lydia and the jailer are baptized.
4. The gospel is carried to Thessalonica.
5. The Bereans prove to be "more noble" in that they received the gospel.
6. The gospel is carried to Athens where Paul challenges the philosophies of the humanistic Epicurians and Stoicks.
7. After the intervention of Gallio, the gospel has free course in Corinth.
8. From Corinth it is on to Ephesus where Paul leaves Aquila and Priscilla with a promise that he will return.
9. By way of Caesarea, Paul travels on to Jerusalem and finally back to Antioch in Syria.

This trip occupies approximately three years (51-54 A.D.). The Jews violently resist the preaching of the gospel in every city with the exception of Athens and Ephesus. Souls are saved, and churches are established. The "good seed" of the kingdom of God is planted.
23 And after he had spent some time there, he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.

And after he had spent some time there: Luke gives no clue about the exact amount of time Paul spends in Antioch. One can only speculate about the many glad reunions that must have ensued as Paul rejoices over the victories of the gospel and laments over its rejections. Surely it gladdens the hearts of these faithful brethren to have Paul safely return to them.

he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples: With this short declaration, Luke begins the account of Paul's third missionary tour. As was the case at the beginning of the second trip, Paul revisits the brethren in Galatia and Phrygia. (For additional information on Galatia and Phrygia, see 16:6.)

24 And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus.

And a certain Jew named Apollos: Luke here introduces for the first time a man who, after some corrections to his doctrinal knowledge, becomes a noble helper to the Apostle Paul. Paul will later declare "I planted, Apollos watered..." (1 Corinthians 3:6).

born at Alexandria: The description of Apollos as "born in Alexandria" tells much about the education and social character of this man. Alexandria is the "chief seat of Hebrew learning. This learning included a knowledge of the Greek version of the Old Testament" (McGarvey, Vol. II 147).
Reese gives the following description of the great city of Alexandria:

Alexandria was a celebrated city and seaport of Egypt on the Mediterranean Sea, twelve miles from the mouth of the Nile River. It was named Alexandria in honor of Alexander the great, who founded it in 332 BC. Many Jews had gone to Alexandria, as it was a famous place of learning. One of the leading Hebrew colleges was located there, and the Alexandrian library was the greatest in the world (490).

an eloquent man: Apollos evidently takes advantage of the educational opportunities available in Alexandria and shows himself to be an accomplished and educated public speaker.

and mighty in the scriptures: Of all the good qualities of this talented man, nothing can be a higher compliment than that paid by Luke when he describes Apollos as "mighty in the scriptures." All the eloquence and polished speaking ability in the world will not replace the need for a knowledge of God's word. A preacher may rivet his audience with flowing words, he may play upon their emotions with tearful stories, he may beat the air with forceful gestures; but, if he does not reveal unto his audience the "unsearchable riches of Christ," "the power of God unto salvation," he has accomplished nothing of lasting value (Ephesians 3:8; Romans 1:16).

came to Ephesus: Apollos makes his appearence in Ephesus.
25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John.

This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord: The person who "instructed" Apollos in "the way of the Lord" is not known, but it is obvious that the message of Jesus Christ burns in the heart of this man because he is overflowing with enthusiasm to preach the good news. In the Greek, the word for "fervent" is zeo, literally "to boil" (Vine, Vol. I 91). Although Apollos has incomplete information concerning Christian baptism, "knowing only the baptism of John," he knows enough about the Messianic prophecies to declare Jesus as Messiah.

knowing only the baptism of John: As will be noted in the next chapter (19:4), John preaches repentance and baptism in anticipation of "him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." John's baptism differs from Christian baptism in that John's baptism offers no promise of the "gift of the Holy Spirit" (2:38). Also, John baptized in no name while the disciples of Christ are taught to baptize into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19; 3:1-2; Mark 1:4-5).

To know only John's baptism was not to know about the crucifixion, the resurrection, the ascension, Pentecost, etc., not to know the Lord's Supper, the first church at Jerusalem, the mission of the apostles, etc. (Lenski 773).
And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.

And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: Upon Apollo’s arrival in Ephesus, he begins to preach what he understands about Jesus without fear or favor.

whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly: Aquila and Priscilla, upon hearing the discourse of this eloquent speaker, realize his need to have explained unto him more accurately "the way of God". They take him aside into a private setting and teach him the things he needs to know.

The reader should notice, here is an example of a woman teaching a man in a private setting. The New Testament teaches that in the capacity in which a woman may teach (privately), she may teach anyone: a man (as noted here), another woman, or a child (Titus 2:4). In the capacity in which she is not permitted to teach (publicly), she may not teach anyone (1 Corinthians 14:34-35; 1 Timothy 2:11-12).

And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace:

And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia: Apollos determines to go to Achaia. Why he decides to move on from Ephesus to Achaia we have no clear way of knowing, but we next find Apollos in Corinth, the capital of Achaia where he accomplishes a great work.
the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: The good reputation of Apollos is seen in the hearty endorsement and recommendation of the brethren in Ephesus.

who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace: It is evident that Apollos is a great aid to the Corinthian brethren. In Paul's own words, he praises the efforts of this great preacher: "I planted, Apollos watered but God gave the increase" (1 Corinthians 3:6).

28 For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publickly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.

What a great talent to be used in the Lord's work! We will pray that the tribe of Apollos will increase today. Following are the qualities of Apollos that make him a great preacher, the same qualities that make great preachers today:

1. He is "an eloquent man" (verse 24). He is educated and has a good command of language.
2. He is "mighty in the scriptures" (verse 24). He is proficient in the knowledge of God's word.
3. He is "fervent in the spirit" (verse 25). He is "boiling over" in his zeal to preach the gospel.
4. He teaches "diligently" (verse 25). He is earnest and persistent in teaching with great conviction.
5. He can accept correction. They "expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly" (verse 26).
6. He has one great theme: "Jesus is the Christ" (verse 28).
Chapter 19

In this chapter Luke continues the story of the Apostle Paul’s third missionary journey. Paul deals with "certain disciples" who have a need to be rebaptized. Later Luke records an encounter with the "seven sons of Sceva." In the last half of the chapter, Paul exposes the futility of worshiping the idol goddess Diana and in so doing makes a longtime enemy of one Demetrius, the silversmith.

1 And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples,

And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth: Luke writes about Apollos only two times. One is in this passage, and the other in the previous chapter, Acts 18:24-28. More details of the life of this great preacher are not supplied by the sacred writers with the exceptions of brief notices in 1 Corinthians 1:12, 3:4-6,22, 16:12 and Titus 3:13.

Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: During the time Apollos is in Corinth, Paul is making his way to Ephesus to keep the promise he makes in Acts 18:21 that he would return.

and finding certain disciples: At Ephesus Paul meets twelve men (verse 7) who have the same incomplete knowledge about Christianity that Apollos has when he first encounters Priscilla and Aquila (18:25).
2 He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.

He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost: This sentence raises several questions and much conjecture as to what takes place on this occasion.

Why does Paul ask these men this question in the first place? In keeping in context with previous events (18:24-27), the obvious explanation is Paul is aware there is a problem with the baptism of these men. It is entirely possible Paul has received word from Aquila and Priscilla or from some other source that these men have been baptized by some of John's disciples, perhaps even Apollos. Coffman says:

They had been baptized ... after the baptism of John had been invalidated. John's baptism lasted only until Pentecost; but the persons who had submitted to it while it was in force were not required to be rebaptized, hence the conclusion that the disciples here were baptized unto John's baptism at a time when it was on longer valid (360).

With the knowledge that the “baptism of John” is no longer valid, Paul sets out to determine to which baptism these men have submitted. He asks,"Have you received the Holy Ghost," meaning the ordinary indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This “gift of the Holy Spirit” is a promise to all (“every one of you”) who will repent and be baptized. The very fact that these men “have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost” is a clear indication they have been baptized with the baptism of John. One of the basic concepts of the New Testament teaches the reception of the Holy Spirit upon the baptism of penitent believers (2:38). The “gift of the Holy Spirit” is not promised by the baptism of John (see notes on 18:25). As Hervey emphasizes:
Nothing can mark more strongly the connection between baptism and the reception of the Holy Spirit than this question does. For it implies, How could you be ignorant of the giving of the Holy Spirit if you were duly baptized (114)?

It is sometimes necessary for one to be rebaptized today. Baptism is to be done "in the name of Jesus Christ" (by his authority) and "for the remission of sins" (2:38). If these criteria are not met in one's baptism, he must be rebaptized. For example, if a person is baptized as an infant, he is baptized without faith or repentance; so he must be rebaptized. If one has been baptized by a denomination that does not believe baptism is "for the remission of sins," then his baptism is invalid or unscriptural. On the other hand, rebaptism for a person that has already been scripturally baptized will accomplish nothing (see notes on 2:38)!

**since:** The reader should not be misled by the word "since." The verbs used in this passage do not indicate the reception of the Holy Spirit is sometime in the future after obedience to the gospel. Vincent gives this explanation:

The two verbs are in the aorist tense, and therefore denote instantaneous acts. The A.V. therefore gives an entirely wrong idea, as there is no question about what happened after believing; but the question relates to what occurred when they believed. Hence Reverse, rightly, Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed (551).

**ye believed:** The word "believed" as used here includes obedience to all the steps for salvation (see notes on 10:43; 13:39).

And they said unto him, *We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost*:

**Ghost:** Paul's inquiry has the desired effect. These men now realize that something is amiss in their baptisms. They did not know about receiving the Holy Spirit.
3 And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.

And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized: By now, both these disciples and Paul realize there is a problem with their baptism, thus the question "Unto what were ye baptized?"

And they said, Unto John's baptism: Now the problem is clear: these men have known only the baptism of John. The baptism of John was only in force during the ministry of John; it was not intended to continue.

4 Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.

Paul explains the basic difference in John's baptism and Christian baptism. The baptism of John was one of "repentance" and "faith" in a coming Savior. Christian baptism is one of "repentance" and "faith" in a Savior who has already come, died, been buried, and risen again. Christian baptism is in the name of Jesus Christ and enjoys not only the "remission" of sin but also the "gift of the Holy Spirit" (2:38) (see 18:25).

5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

We can appreciate the sincerity of these brethren. As soon as they understand the problem, they are ready to make corrections.
One final thought before moving on. Paul gives an example of inquiring about the baptism of brethren before he is willing to accept them as being in Christian fellowship. One should not be offended at being asked, nor timid about asking, about the baptismal situation of anyone professing Christianity. Being baptized scripturally is a critical prerequisite to being "in Christ." One should be willing to ask himself, “Was I scripturally baptized?” If the answer is in the negative, then haste should be made to be baptized "in the name of Jesus Christ," "for the remission of sins" that you might receive "the gift of the Holy Spirit" (2:38).

6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them: The "laying on of the apostles' hands" is the means of giving others the ability to do miraculous works, that is "speaking in tongues," etc. (For more extensive notes, see 6:6 and 8:15-18.)

What has occurred in this account is the same as that in chapter eight. The Samariaitans become Christians by obeying the gospel. "Every one" who repents and is baptized receives "the remission of sins," "and the gift of the Holy Spirit" (2:38). Later Peter and John are sent to Samaria that they may "lay hands" on some of the brethren so they may receive the ability to do miraculous works (8:15-18). There is no reason to make the mistake of attempting to connect baptism with miraculous gifts of the Spirit. Lenski gives our summary:

But one should not think that baptism and the charismatic gifts go together. Pentecost excludes such a view, for none of the 3,000 baptized on that day spoke with tongues. The saving presence of the Spirit is evident in baptism; his charismatic presence is an entirely different thing and is bestowed as the Spirit wills (1 Cor. 12:11) for his own special purposes. To conclude that, because the Spirit came charismatically after the
baptism when Paul laid on his hands, therefore the Spirit was not bestowed with saving grace in baptism, and then to stress the idea that this was a "baptism in water," is to antagonize John 3:5 (785).

**and they spake with tongues:** The speaking in "tongues" (foreign languages) is the usual way in which the Spirit demonstrates the coming of miraculous gifts (see 2:4; 10:46).

**and prophesied:** Vine says to "prophesy" is to "speak forth of the mind and counsel of God" (Vol. III 221). In this case, this "speaking forth" is under the direct influence of the Holy Spirit.

7 And all the men were about twelve.

Thus, these twelve men appear upon the pages of divine writ, and thus, they depart. They are now without a doubt Christians. They are endowed for usefulness in the Lord's kingdom.

8 And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.

**And he went into the synagogue:** It is the custom of the apostles to take advantage of the crowd that gathered at the "synagogue" (see notes on 13:14-15; 17:1).

**and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God:** Paul continues in his efforts to establish the church at Ephesus by reasoning with and attempting to change the minds of those gathered at the synagogue; but, as the next verse will show, not everyone is reasonable or easily persuaded.
It should be noted that Paul understands that the kingdom of God has been established. The kingdom of God on earth is the church of Christ (Matthew 16:18-19; Mark 9:1; Colossians 1:13).

9 But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.

But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude: Paul has enjoyed an exceptional time of peace with little opposition to his efforts to preach in Ephesus, but now the situation is going to change. One can be assured, if things are going well for the Lord's people, the devil will muster his troops and do all he can to disrupt the progress. The Jews at Ephesus have now hardened their hearts and are speaking evil of "THAT WAY" (see notes on 9:2).

he departed from them, and separated the disciples: Paul makes an effort to avoid the mounting opposition by leaving the synagogue and taking the disciples with him.

disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus: This school is likely one of the lecture rooms commonly maintained by various scholars for the purpose of teaching their particular specialty. Tyrannus may have been a teacher of history, medicine, philosophy, etc. Bruce believes the classes held by this type of school were usually over by eleven a.m; thus, it is likely that Paul used the room after the school closed (388).

Absolutely nothing, either scriptural or secular, is known of Tyrannus. In the Greek the name "Tyrannus" means tyrant" (Boles 301). “One is left to wonder if his parents or his students named him” (Bruce 388)!
10 And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

And this continued by the space of two years: For the "space of two years," Paul teaches in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. In all, Paul spends three years preaching the gospel in Ephesus (20:31). This is the longest time Paul spends in any one city.

so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks: Paul has long desired to preach in Asia. Now he has his opportunity, and the gospel spreads throughout the country. It is generally believed by most scholars that it is during this time that the "seven churches of Asia" addressed in the Revelation by John (Revelation 2 and 3) and the church at Colossae are established.

The term "Asia" does not refer to the continent but rather to the Roman province of Asia (see notes on 16:6).

11 And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul:

Luke refers to the miracles Paul performs as "special." We will understand why in our study of the next verse. (For information on the purpose of miracles, see notes on 2:17 and 4:30.)

12 So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.
So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons: The thing that makes these miracles "special" is the fact that the miracle is accomplished not by the touch of the apostle's hand, as is the usual case, but rather by the touch of a piece of cloth that has been in contact with the apostle's body. This manner of healing is not unlike the woman who would touch "the hem of his garment" in Matthew 9:20 or those who desire that the "shadow" of Peter might pass over them in Acts 5:15.

and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them: Apparently, there are those who come to Paul, as he labors at his job of tent making, and take the cloth that is commonly tied around the head to absorb sweat (handkerchief) or the material worn around the waist to protect the clothing (apron). When these cloths are applied to the sick, they are healed; and demons depart from those who are thus afflicted.

Leave it to the religious charlatans of our day to make merchandise of this occurrence by attempting to sell their audience a "prayer cloth" or an "anointed cloth" that naturally is "guaranteed" to heal.

13 Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth.

Then certain of the vagabond Jews: The word "vagabond" literally means "to go around" (Vine, Vol. IV 84). Several versions render the word "strolling."

exorcists: "Exorcists comes from the Greek word exorkizo, which means to exact an oath; ..." (Boles 302). These "strolling" Jews believe by uttering some mystical name or a series of meaningless words they can expel demons out of those possessed.
took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth: It is interesting the way Luke words this passage. These would-be exorcists take it “upon themselves” to copy the words of Paul as a mere charm or incantation. It is obvious they do not know Jesus; and, like Simon (8:18) and Elymas (13:8), they do not know the difference in a miracle performed by the power of God and one of the counterfeit miracles for which they are famous.

14 And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so.

And there were seven sons: Apparently, the fact there are "seven" of these brothers adds to the mystique of their profession.

of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests: Nothing is known about "Sceva" except what is given here. "No high priest by the name of Sceva appears in any Jewish writing" (Lenski 793). Why Luke refers to him as "chief of the priests" is unknown.

which did so: These sons of Sceva are going to include this "adjuring in the name of Jesus" into their repertory of magical formulas with startling results.

15 And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?

The demon possessing this man is clearly insulted that these imposters would invoke the names of Jesus and Paul as charms to cast him out. The demon is saying, "I recognize and am aware of the authority of Jesus, I am acquainted with Paul; but who do you think you are!"
16 And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

What is about to happen to these sons of Sceva surely is not what they expected! The indignation of this evil spirit prompts the man in whom he dwells to explode upon them in a fanatical frenzy. Driven by the fury of a demon and with strength like the demon-possessed man of the Gadarenes (Mark 5:3-4), these fake exorcists are "leaped" upon, "overcame" and "prevailed against" in less time than it takes Luke to record the event. We can be sure when this "exorcism" turns into an "exercise" for the would-be "exorcists" they are happy to escape only "naked and wounded!"

17 And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.

The events above soon become common knowledge throughout the area.

Certainly all Ephesus must have laughed at them as they fled naked and bruised along the street; but when the people took a second thought, and remembered that this discomfiture had come from a misuse of the name of Jesus, it was but natural that this name was magnified, and that fear came upon all (McGarvey, Vol. II 156-157).

18 And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds.

By exposing the fakery of these sons of Sceva, the power of the name of Jesus is known not only by the general population but also is realized by some Christians for the first time. "Many" now see the hypocrisy of hanging onto their superstitions. Some of the brethren who have not made a clean break with their former practices are ready to "confess" and renounce their "deeds." To our shame things have not changed much in modern times. Some, who ought to
know better, can scarcely get out of bed before reading their "horoscopes," checking with their "psychic," or putting on their "charms."

19 Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.

Many of them also which used curious arts: “Curious arts” include such practices as sleight of hand, fortune telling, the casting of spells, incantations, charms, astrology, exorcism, superstitions, and the black arts in general. "This whole account fully confirms the reputation assigned to Ephesus by ancient writers as the chief center of magical arts in the whole Roman empire" (McGarvey, Vol. II 158). Vine defines "curious arts" as "the arts of those who pry into forbidden things, with the aid of evil spirits" (Vol. I 261).

brought their books together: The formulas for these secret potions, magical words, and mystical spells are written upon pages of papyri or parchment and kept in books. These collections of magic information became known as "Ephesian scripts" (Bruce 392).

and burned them before all men: The burning of a particular type of literature in public has always served as a sign of a general renouncement of the doctrine or practice espoused by that literature. So it is here; many turn from the practice of the "curious arts."

and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver: There is considerable discussion as to the exact coin referred to by "pieces of silver," and thus the exact dollar amount represented by these books is difficult to estimate. Amounts from $8,000 to $75,000 are used by various scholars to estimate the expense. Suffice it to say, these books are counted as very valuable to their owners and the burning of this asset is no small
sacrifice. The spiritual value of the destruction of these wicked books also cannot be ascertained. It is certain these teachings are in "direct opposition to THE WAY and thus aligned in some fashion with the evil one" (De Welt 260).

20 So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.

We have noticed in past comments that every time truth is vindicated, the wicked are punished, and the gospel contended for, then the cause of Christ flourishes (2:41; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5) (see additional comments on 6:7).

21 After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome.

After these things were ended: This statement is a reference to the events that just transpired.

Paul purposed in the spirit: This statement literally means “if it be the will of God.”

McGarvey makes the following comments with which this writer agrees:

The words, "he purposed in the Spirit," have been taken by the majority of the commentators to mean no more than that he formed the purpose; and our revisers seem from their use of the small s with the word spirit, to have understood them in the same way. But if this is the meaning of the expression, it is tautological, the words "in the spirit" being redundant. These writers forget the facts mentioned before by Luke, which account for the expression. When Paul first purposed to come to this very city of Ephesus, as the capital of Asia, he was forbidden by the Holy Spirit to do so; and when he then purposed to go into Bithynia he was likewise forbidden (xvi. 6,7); and by this
experience he had learned to lay out no plans for the future without an expressed allowance for this divine overruling. Even when he promised, on leaving Aquila and Priscilla at Ephesus, to return thither, his words were, "I will return again unto you if God will" (xviii. 21). ... The real meaning, determined by both his previous and his subsequent experience, is that he formed this purpose subject to the approval of the Holy Spirit, and with a conscience reference to the probability that the Spirit might overrule it (Vol. II 159).

when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem: At this point in Luke’s account, we need to recall the reason for this trip. Paul has determined to take up a collection for the poor saints in Judea. He intends to include Macedonia, Achaia, the region of Galatia, and Corinth in this deed of charity (Romans 15:26; 1 Corinthians 16:1). (For additional notes on Macedonia and Achaia, see 16:9; 18:12.)

saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome: The energy, zeal, and courage of this mighty apostle seem boundless. Even as he is involved in one great work, he is making plans for another. He is truly a man driven by the urgency of preaching the good news. Would to God that this evangelical fire might be rekindled in us!

Paul sought not to rest, but pressed on as if he had yet done nothing. He is already possessed of Ephesus and Asia; but he purposes for Macedonia and Achaia. He has his eye upon Jerusalem, then upon Rome, afterward on to Spain (Rom. 15:24). No Caesar, no Alexander the Great, no other hero comes up to the magnanimity of this little Benjamite. Faith and love to God and man had enlarged his heart, even as the sand of the sea (Coffman 369).
22 So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus; but he himself stayed in Asia for a season.

So he sent into Macedonia: See notes on Acts 16:9.

two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus: Timothy is a frequent companion of the apostle and is held dearly in Paul's heart, being referred to as "my dearly beloved son" (2 Timothy 1:2) (see notes on 14:20; 16:1).

and Erastus: It is generally assumed by a majority of scholars that this "Erastus" is the "chamberlain" (Romans 16:23) or treasurer of the city of Corinth. If this is the case, we can understand Paul's choice of this man to handle the details of taking up a monetary collection for the poor saints.

but he himself stayed in Asia for a season: Paul remains in Ephesus to take every advantage of the "great effectual door" that is opened to him (1 Corinthians 16:9). According to the record in 1 Corinthians 16:8, Paul desires to stay in Ephesus until Pentecost. Lenski says:

Pentecost came late in May, and May was the month when the great festival of Artemis (Diana) was observed in Ephesus. The tumult staged by Demetrius must have taken place before this festival, and immediately after the tumult Paul departed (20:1) (801).
23 And the same time there arose no small stir about that way.

As McGarvey says, "By the same stroke of the pen with which Paul wrote to the Corinthians, 'a great and effectual door is opened unto me,' he also wrote, 'and there are many adversaries' (1 Corinthians 16:8-9)" (Vol. II 161). Any time a “great effectual door is opened” to the gospel, it will not be long until the devil will raise his ugly head and do his best to close it!

Here, again, we find "no small stir about THAT WAY" (see notes on 9:2).

24 For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen;

For a certain man named Demetrius: The name "Demetrius" is a common name among the pagans; any attempt to ascertain more information about this man than here given by Luke is futile.

a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana: A silversmith is simply one who works with silver. We learn this particular "silversmith" makes "silver shrines."

The word "shrines" denotes small portable temples, or edifices, made of silver, so as to represent the temple of Diana, and probably containing a silver image of the goddess. Such shrines would be purchased by devotees and by worshippers of the goddess, and by strangers, who would be desirous of possessing a representation of one of the seven wonders of the world (Reese 509).

brought no small gain unto the craftsmen: Literally, the manufacture of these shrines brings much gain to their makers.
25 Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth.

**Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation:** This gathering may be representative of the earliest trade unions. Demetrius calls together the artists and the laborers of the profession of silver crafting to present his case against the threat Paul poses to their very existence.

**and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth:** What better way to get one’s attention than to tell him the source of his wealth is being threatened.

26 Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands:

**Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people:** Paul’s reputation precedes him. The extent of Paul’s labor, as given in verse 10, is here verified by Demetrius. This is one of the rare exceptions where the accusations against Paul are correct and true. Demetrius even admits to the base motive for his zeal, that being the loss of his wealth. The preaching of Paul is indeed a threat to the wealth of these idol makers because the gospel of Christ turns men from the futility of idol worship.
saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands: The hypocrisy of these idol makers is exposed in this statement. "The craftsman whom he addressed had reason to know, even better than any one else in Ephesus, that the pieces of silver which they had hammered and polished with their own hands were not gods" (McGarvey, Vol. II 162). Is it not within the realm of human logic and common sense to realize that greater is the maker of the idol than is the idol?

27 So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth.

So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought: Demetrius could see the handwriting on the wall, the end of what has been a lucrative profession. This statement has a certain prophetic value. With the coming of Christianity, the end of the worship of Diana is soon to be realized.

but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed: Perhaps Demetrius tries to elevate his motives from a gross concern over monetary loss to the higher plain of religion. It remains obvious that his first concern is for their wealth and secondly for the promotion of the worship of Diana.

The goddess Diana was one of many false gods celebrated by the heathen. To the Greeks she was known as Artemis and to the Romans as Diana. There are some distinctions drawn between Artemis and Diana, but in general they are considered as the same.
The temple of Diana was considered to be one of the seven wonders of the world. It is small wonder that the wrath of the heathen is ignited against Paul when they see his preaching is soon to bring this magnificent monument to idolatry to "nought." Coincidentally, the ruins of this pagan stronghold stand forever as a monument to the power of the gospel of Christ. Following is a description of this magnificent structure as given by Conybeare and Howson:

But one building at Ephesus surpassed all the rest in magnificence and in fame. This was the Temple of Artemis or Diana, which glittered in brilliant beauty at the head of the harbor, and was reckoned by the ancients as one of the wonders of the world. The sun, it was said, saw nothing in his course more magnificent than Diana's Temple. ... Though nothing now remains on the spot to show us what or even where it was, there is enough in its written memorials to give us some notion of its appearance and splendor.... The colonnades of the Ephesian Diana really constituted an epoch in the history of Art, for in them was first matured that graceful Ionic style, the feminine beauty of which was more suited to the genius of the Asiatic Greek, than the sterner and plainer Doric, in which the Parthenon and Propylea of Athens were built. The scale on which the Temple was erected was magnificently extensive. It was 425 feet in length and 220 feet in breadth, and the columns were 60 feet high. The number of columns was 127, each of them the gift of a king; ... The folding doors were of cyprus wood; the part which was not open to the sky was roofed over with cedar; and the staircase was formed of the wood of one single vine from the island of Cyprus. The value and fame of the Temple were enhanced by its being the treasury where a large portion of the wealth of Western Asia was stored up. It is probable that there was no religious building in the world in which was concentrated a greater amount of admiration, enthusiasm, and superstition (465-466).
whom all Asia and the world worshippeth: Perhaps Demetrius exaggerates a bit in his claim that "all Asia and the world" worship Diana, but this embellishment is to emphasize the sweeping effect of the influence of Paul's preaching.

28 And when they heard these sayings, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.

And when they heard these sayings, they were full of wrath: This crowd has a twofold reason to be “full of wrath.” Paul is not only a threat to their pocketbooks, of itself grievous enough; but to add insult to injury, he has also attacked their sacred cow, their religion (see notes on 16:19).

and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians: Just as the useless pleadings of the prophets of Baal went unheeded (1 Kings 18:26), so here again the ignorant cries of the worshipers of Diana fall in futility upon the deaf ears of an idol god.

29 And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre.

And the whole city was filled with confusion: Because of the charges of Demetrius, a panic falls over the entire city of Ephesus. As James points out, "... how great a matter a little fire kindleth" (3:5)!
and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel: In the frenzy of these heathen to do something about the threat they now perceive, they catch two men they know are a part of THAT WAY (verse 23). Their intent appears clear: they intend to vent their fury upon these two.

The name "Gaius" is a common Latin name; it is not possible to determine with certainty the identity of this man. A fellow named Gaius is a traveling companion of Paul (20:4). Paul baptizes a Gaius with his own hands (1 Corinthians 1:14); and a Gaius is also named in Romans 16:23. John addresses the book of 3 John to a Gaius.

Aristarchus is a man of Thessalonica (20:4) and is shown to be another of Paul's faithful companions (27:2; Colossians 4:10; Philemon 24).

they rushed with one accord into the theatre: The people in this mob are worked into such an irrational state because of this perceived threat to their way of living that they rush into the theatre to bring swift punishment to their captives. "The theatre of Ephesus was, next to the Temple of Artemis, its chief glory. ...it is capable of holding twenty-five thousand people. It was constructed chiefly for gladiatorial combats with wild beasts and the like, but was also used for dramatic entertainments" (Plumptre 134). McGarvey says, "That theatre still remains with its marble seats intact, by far the best of the preserved ruins on the site of Ephesus" (Vol. II 164).
30 And when Paul would have entered in unto the people, the disciples suffered him not.

Apparently, it is only in being unable to find Paul that the crowd catches his companions instead. Paul shows his readiness to make an attempt to rescue his friends, but the disciples see the futility of such an action. Paul could not have saved Gaius and Aristarchus, and he would have compounded the problem by putting his own life in jeopardy.

31 And certain of the chief of Asia, which were his friends, sent unto him, desiring him that he would not adventure himself into the theatre.

And certain of the chief of Asia: These men by name are known as the "Asiarchs." Coffman explains their office as:

The Asiarchs were men of the highest rank, being invariably chosen from among the wealthiest of the people. They were ten in number, representing the ten cities of Proconsular Asia; they presided over all sacred rites. One of the requirements of their office was that they should provide at their own expense the public games in honor of the gods and the deity of the emperor (374).

which were his friends: This great apostle is truly an amazing man. His influence not only touches the beggar by the wayside; but his fearless presence in preaching the gospel, his gentlemanly tact in persuading the lost, and his genuine love for souls gain for him respect from men in authority. Among Paul's honorable friends are Sergius Paulus (13:7); Gallio (18:14-17); Festus (25:9-25); Agrippa (26:28-32); and Julius, the Roman centurion (27:3-43). This "chosen vessel" (9:15) of the Lord has friends in high places.
sent unto him, desiring him that he would not adventure himself into the theatre: As is the case with the disciples, these prominent men show their solicitous concern for Paul by using their influence to constrain him from going into the theater. Paul later refers to his deliverance as being by the providence of God. "We were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life ... but God which raiseth the dead ... delivered us from so great a death" (2 Corinthians 1:8-0).

32 Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together.

Most of this leaderless mob have not yet perceived the actual reason for their pandemonium. The crowd is divided as to the source of the problem with most ("the more part") totally unaware of what the turmoil is about. They are simply caught up in the frenzy of the mob's behavior.

33 And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander beckoned with the hand, and would have made his defence unto the people.

And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward: This is all that we know with certainty about this particular Alexander. It is likely he is an influential, articulate man whom the Jews think can defend them before the crowd. The Jews do not want to be considered as supporters of Paul.
And Alexander beckoned with the hand, and would have made his defense unto the people: Alexander attempts to quiet the crowd that he may make a defense for the Jews. It should be remembered the Jews are just as opposed to the worship of idols as are the Christians; but lest they also suffer the hostility of the crowd, it is their desire to lay the blame for this attack on Diana upon Paul and his followers.

34 But when they knew that he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.

But when they knew that he was a Jew: This ploy of the Jews to dissociate themselves from the Christians does not work. As far as these heathen are concerned, Jews and Christians are all counted as the same, a threat to Diana.

all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians: The appearance of this "Jew" before the crowd has the effect of galvanizing them into a united action. Even those who "knew not wherefore they were come together" now realize who is the enemy. For the "space of two hours," these pagans cry out in frustration to their false goddess.

In the same spirit as the heathen of Ephesus, the devotees of Baal shouted themselves hoarse in repeatedly calling upon the name of Baal (1 Kings 18:26-29). We are not far removed from this pagan influence even today. We have those who find much religious piousness in the repetition of a certain number of religious expressions like, "hail Mary" or even the vain repeating of the name of Jesus!

But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking (Matthew 6:7).
35 And when the townclerk had appeased the people, he said, Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter?

And when the townclerk had appeased the people: Vincent says the "townclerk" is the "recorder who had charge of the city-archives, and whose duty it was to draw up official decrees and present them to assemblies of the people. Next to the commander, he was the most important personage in the Greek free cities" (556). This man now takes over the leadership of this howling mob and in a matter of minutes has their silence and full attention.

he said, Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana: We soon see the talent of this townclerk. It seems obvious this man of authority, like the Asiarchs, has a certain respect for Paul and his followers; but he also knows that he dare not come in open confrontation with this hostile mob. With the skill of a trained diplomat, he restores a certain peace and normalcy to this crowd with an appeal to their pride. The ruffled feathers of this pagan mob are soothed by the rhetorical question, who in the world does not know that Ephesus is the "temple-keeper" for the "great goddess Diana?"

The Greek word neokoros is here translated "worshipper," but it is literally understood as "temple-keeper" or "temple sweeper" (Vine, Vol. IV 115). The word is rendered as such in the Revised Version and in the marginal reading of the King James Version.

and of the image which fell down from Jupiter: To lend further credence to his line of persuasion, the townclerk reminds them of the legend that held that the image of Diana fell from heaven, the abode of Jupiter.
36 Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly.

**Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against:** The conclusion to the townclerk's argument is as follows: everyone knows that Ephesus is the temple-keeper for Diana and the very image of this great goddess fell from heaven; therefore, who can successfully speak against her worship?

**ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly:** The logic follows that since these men can do nothing to rob Ephesus of her glory or take anything from the honor of Diana, they should proceed with caution lest this turmoil draw the attention of the Romans. The Romans do not have much patience with any form of insurrection from the civilian population; therefore, for the common welfare of all, it would be good not to arouse their ire.

37 For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess.

This artful peacemaker reminds the crowd that "these men" (Paul and his followers) are not guilty of any crime. They have not plundered the temple of Diana nor have they spoken against (blasphemed) the goddess.

38 Wherefore if Demetrius, and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies: let them implead one another.

**Wherefore if Demetrius, and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man:** The townclerk further reminds his audience that if these silver craftsmen have a charge against "any man," there are laws to accommodate their complaints.
the law is open: The phrase "the law is open" literally means "the courts are open" (Vincent 557).

and there are deputies: These deputies or proconsuls are governors appointed by the Romans to act as the representatives of the Roman government. The Greek word is "anthupatos, anti, instead of, and hupatos, supreme, ... one acting in the place of a consul ..." (Vine, Vol. III 217).

let them implead on another: Thayer defines “implead” as “to call to account, bring a charge against, accuse” (166-1-1458). The townclerk is telling Demetrius, “If you have a charge against Paul, take it to court!”

39 But if ye inquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly.

The speaker now adds yet another consideration for his crowd. If there are more problems to be dealt with, they should be considered in a "lawful assembly." He makes it plain the assembly now in progress is an illegal assembly and, as such, punishable by Roman law.

40 For we are in danger to be called in question for this day’s uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse.

For we are in danger to be called in question for this uproar: Our skillful orator suggests to his crowd that are at this point all ears to his suggestions, “Do we want to have to explain this riot to the Romans?”
there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse: This crowd now sees it has been caught up in the fervor of mob behavior for which there is no legal justification. The townclerk uses the term "concourse," which literally means "a twisting together." This term may refer to "anything which is rolled or twisted into a mass; and so of a mass of people, with an underlying idea of confusion, a mob" (Vincent 557).

41 And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly.

Here is yet another stroke of genius by this townclerk who has proved to be the man of the hour. He summarily dismisses the assembly. We can imagine that by now they are more than ready to be dismissed! This courageous townclerk has single handedly defused this explosive mob into a submissive and obedient crowd ready to return peacefully to their homes. With tact and ability, this man first appeals to the pride of the mob (verse 35) and winds up with the threat that they are in "danger" of having to account for this illegal "uproar" before the Romans (verse 40).

The real credit, of course, lies in the providence of God. There are to be no martyrs in Ephesus at this time. God has other fields of endeavor for these disciples. Without speaking one word in their own defense, Paul, Gaius, and Aristarchus are all preserved that they may continue the good fight. "Marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well" (Psalms 139:14)!
This chapter gives record of various trips made by Paul after the riot in Ephesus. There is a very sad overtone to the chapter as the apostle bids a tearful farewell to the brethren at Ephesus and warns them of the "grievous wolves" that are going to decimate the "flock" (verse 29).

1 And after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples, and embraced them, and departed for to go into Macedonia.

Paul realizes the "great and effectual door" that has been opened to him in Ephesus has now been closed by his "many adversaries" (1 Corinthians 16:9). The wisdom of Paul dictates a move rather than to remain and draw additional retaliation upon the Christians at Ephesus. Since Paul has previously intended to go again into Macedonia (19:21), he decides that now is the time (see 16:9 for notes on Macedonia).

2 And when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece,

The characteristic brevity of the recorder of the book of Acts is again evident in the record of this journey. How long Paul remains in Macedonia is left to our guess. Where Paul gives "much exhortation" is also left to our assumption. Plumptre says, "we may take for granted that St. Paul would revisit the churches which he had himself founded at Thessalonica and Berea, as well as at Philippi" (136-137).
The word "Greece" is another name for the area often referred to as "Achaia" (see notes on 18:12).

3 And there abode three months. And when the Jews laid wait for him, as he was about to sail into Syria, he purposed to return through Macedonia.

As Paul and his associates make plans to sail to Syria, they learn of a murderous plot laid for them by the Jews. It should be remembered that Paul and company have with them the "collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem." Because of this large amount of money, the Jews likely have little problem in recruiting a band of thugs to perpetrate this dastardly deed. Paul foils their scheme by going over land instead of by sea.

During this three months' stay in Greece, Paul writes the letter to the Romans (Romans 15:25) and perhaps also the epistle to the Galatians.

4 And there accompanied him into Asia Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus.

And there accompanied him into Asia: Paul here mentions the seven men selected by the various churches to "bring their liberality unto Jerusalem" (1 Corinthians 16:3). McGarvey says:

There being no banks or paper currency in those days, the money had to be carried in silver on the persons of the messengers, and it was important that no one should be so loaded as to indicate the fact to the sharp eyes of robbers: hence the necessity for so many messengers to carry it (Vol. II 176).
**Sopater of Berea:** The messenger from the congregation at Berea is one Sopater, a "kinsman" of Paul (Romans 16:21).

**and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus:** Those sent from Thessalonica are named Aristarchus, whom we previously met in Acts 19:29 when he was seized by the mob at Ephesus, and Secundus, which by literal interpretation means “second.” It seems the father of Secundus has a quirk for giving his sons numbers for names. In this same family, there is Tertius (third) and Quartus (fourth) (Romans 16:22-23).

**and Gaius of Derbe:** This Gaius of Derbe is not the same man as the Macedonian Gaius who is involved in the riot at Ephesus (see notes on 19:29).

**and Timotheus:** Luke does not state where Timothy is from; but from a previous record, we know he is from Lystra (16:1).

**and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus:** Here are two new names mentioned as traveling companions of Paul. The name Tychicus means "fortunate," the Greek equivalent of "Felix," while Trophimus means "foster-child." Both of these names are quite common. Tychicus is most likely an Ephesian. Paul speaks often of him (Ephesians 6:21; Colossians 4:7; 2 Timothy 4:12; Titus 3:12). Trophimus is an Ephesian mentioned again in Acts 21:29 and also in 2 Timothy 4:20.

5 These going before tarried for us at Troas.

The disciples mentioned in the preceding verse arrive at Troas before Paul where they await his coming. The use of the pronoun "us" indicates Luke is once again united with the Apostle Paul.
It is generally believed Luke was left in Philippi (16:40), which he indicated by dropping the use of the pronouns "we" and "us" in his narrative. The period that Luke is separated from Paul may have been as long as seven years. McGarvey notes, "during this absence from the narrative, many parts of it have been hurried and elliptical; but we shall henceforth find it much more circumstantial" (Vol. II 177). (For notes on Troas, see 16:8.)

Following is an excellent summation by Coffman of those traveling with Paul and the areas they represent in this mission of mercy:

One may observe that the Macedonian congregations were represented by Sopater, Aristarchus and Secundus; the Galatian congregations were represented by Gaius of Derbe and Timothy of Lystra; the ones in Asia were represented by Tychicus and Trophimus; and it may be inferred from 2 Corinthians 8:6ff that the Corinthian contribution was entrusted to Titus and two other brethren sent by Paul to Corinth to receive it (381).

6 And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days.

And we sailed away from Philippi: Notice again the language of the narrative has changed from the third person (they) to the first person (we), thus indicating the presence of Luke with Paul.
after the days of unleavened bread: There are those who would surmise that Paul's purpose in tarrying in Philippi is to observe the Passover. There is no indication this is the case at all; rather this notation is simply a way Luke uses to identify the time these things are happening. We know by this entry in Luke's record that it has been a full year since Paul left Ephesus. Paul's intentions were to remain in Ephesus until Passover, and now it is Passover time again one year later (1 Corinthians 16:8).

The Passover, which is the most important of all Jewish feast days, is observed on the fourteenth day of the first Jewish month. This first month is called Abib or Nisan and corresponds to the last part of our month of March and the first part of April. The following seven days, beginning with the fifteenth day of Abib, are known as the Feast of Unleaven Bread (Numbers 28:16).

and came unto them to Troas in five days: The reader may remember an earlier trip from Troas to Philippi required only two days (16:11), but the return trip lasts five days. This is but a reminder of the uncertainty of travel in those days. It takes only a contrary wind to stretch a two-day trip into five days.

where we abode seven days: There is some discussion as to what went on during this time from Tuesday until Monday, but there is no real reason for concern. Luke is there in person. If anything happened that God desired us to know, Luke would have recorded it. Suffice it to say, that Paul and these brethren desire to observe the Lord's supper with the church at Troas.
7 And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.

And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread: Here is the first mention of a specified day when Christians meet for the express purpose of observing the Lord's supper. The language is plain: the disciples assemble upon the "first day of the week to break bread." The Jews have no names for the days of the week; they simply number them counting from their sabbath, which is the seventh day of the week. Thus, the day after the sabbath (the seventh day) is "day one" or the "first day of the week" (Sunday). This practice establishes a divine example, and the logic follows that we also are to keep this pattern and assemble upon the first day of the week for observing the Lord's supper.

There are numerous questions that have arisen from this verse, some of which are worthy of our consideration:

1. When does the "first day of the week" become the day of worship rather than the "seventh day" (sabbath) as practiced by the Jews?

We are not told how the "first day" becomes the day of worship for Christians, but it is not difficult to ascertain. Jesus is resurrected and appears before his disciples upon the "first day of the week" (John 20:19). On the following Sunday, Jesus again appears to his disciples (John 20:26). The Lord's church is established upon the first day of the week (see notes on 2:1). Paul affirms it is the custom of the churches to assemble upon Sunday by giving orders to the Corinthian brethren, as he had also given to the Galatians, to "lay by in store" upon the "first day of the week" (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). John refers to this specified day as the "Lord's day" (Revelation 1:10).
2. Is Sunday the Christian Sabbath?

The quick answer is no, the Lord’s day of the New Testament is not akin to the sabbath of the Old Testament. But perhaps the excellent comments given by Lenski offer a better explanation:

To call our Sunday the Christian "Sabbath" is to apply a wrong and misleading name. Sunday as a day of rest and worship for Christians is just about the opposite of the Jewish Sabbath. The latter was wholly compulsory, the former is altogether voluntary. We keep Sunday because we want and need it for the public worship without which we cannot get along in our Christian life (826).

3. What is the exact chronology of events as they occurred and is the time Jewish time, sundown to sundown (a day being from approximately 6:00 O’clock in the evening until 6:00 O’clock the next evening) or is the time Roman, midnight to midnight (as our modern time, a day being from 12:00 O’clock midnight until 12:00 O’clock midnight the next night)?

Following are the events of this narrative as they occurred:

1. The disciples "came together" on "the first day of the week" (Sunday) [likely in the afternoon or early evening (verse 7)].

2. They observe the Lord’s supper. To observe the Lord's supper seems to have been the primary purpose of the meeting; there is no reason to think otherwise than that they did it immediately (verse 7).
3. Paul preaches to them "and continues until midnight" (verse 7).

4. Eutychus falls out of the window and is "taken up dead," and raised from the dead by Paul (verses 9-10).

5. Paul and the disciples break bread and eat (share a common meal) (verse 11).

6. Paul departs at "break of day" on the "morrow" (the next day, Thayer 229-1-1887), which would be Monday (verses 7, 11).

There is no reason to believe the time frame mentioned by Luke is Jewish time. If one insists on the use of Jewish time keeping, the following conclusions will still be true:

1. If the disciples met on Saturday evening after 6:00 O'clock as some maintain, Paul could not have left on the "morrow" (the next day) as it would still have been the "first day of the week" (Sunday).

2. If the time keeping is Jewish, the disciples would have met early on Sunday evening and observed the Lord's supper before 6:00 O'clock because at 6:00 O'clock the day became Monday, the second day of the week.

**Paul preached unto them:** Even the admonition from the great Apostle Paul takes second place to the "breaking of bread." This is no ordinary meal! This "breaking of bread" is a celebration of the Lord's supper!

**ready to depart on the morrow:** It is Paul's plan to leave on the next day. As noted above, Thayer defines "morrow" as "the next day," which would have been Monday (229).
and continued his speech until midnight: Paul perhaps realizes this occasion will be the last opportunity to speak to this congregation face to face; therefore, he takes advantage of the time to remove any doubts, solve as many problems as possible, and reassure these young Christians of the realities of serving God.

8 And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together.

There is some speculation as to the reason to mention the setting for Paul's extensive discourse; but it seems that Luke, forever the physician, is laying groundwork for an explanation of the events in the next verse. The "many lights" in this relatively small enclosure would have produced overheating along with a shortage of oxygen.

9 And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead.

And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep: Because of the heat, the stuffy atmosphere, and the length of Paul's sermon, a young man is overcome with sleep and falls out the window. He is probably sitting in the window in hopes of reviving himself with some fresh air.

and fell down from the third loft: In Eastern houses the windowsill usually extended out over the street or a courtyard. There was no glass in the window; therefore, it would have been a simple matter for a sleeping lad to fall out. In this case the window was in the "third loft," literally the third story.
and was taken up dead: Eutychus takes what amounts to a three-story fall! It is no wonder he is "taken up dead." It should be noted that Eutychus "was taken up dead" not taken up for dead, or as if he were dead. Luke, the trained physician, declares him dead.

10 And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him.

As is usually the case, the preacher does not enter until the physician has done all he can do. It also seems the crowd has begun their lamentations at the death of this young man as Paul implores, "Trouble not yourselves." There is no doubt, the spirit of Eutychus has left his body; he is dead.

We emphasize the fact that the lad is dead to forestall the attempts of those who would dismiss all the miracles of the Bible by saying there is a non-miraculous explanation. This lad is dead when Paul "fell upon him and embraced him." Miraculously his life is restored. Paul says, "his life is in him." The spirit of Eutychus is restored; he is alive!

11 When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed.

When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten: It is the understanding of this writer, along with a number of commentators, that this breaking of bread is a common meal taken by Paul for nourishment before his trip. There are those who believe this breaking of bread is the Lord's supper, but this cannot be the case. If the observing of the Lord's supper comes sometime after midnight and the time keeping is Roman, it would now be Monday. Surely they do not meet "on the first day of the week to break bread" and then wait until Monday. If the time keeping is Jewish and they come together on Saturday night, the
observing of the Lord's supper would have been on the "first day of the week"; but Paul could not have left on the "morrow" (the next day) because it would have still been the first day of the week.

**and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed:** We can only imagine the content of the conversation that took place between Paul and these devoted disciples. The entire night has been spent in teaching and hearing the "unsearchable riches of Christ" (Ephesians 3:8). At "break of day," the apostle and his company resume their trip toward Jerusalem.

12 And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted.

The physician gives us one final assurance about the condition of Eutychus. He is alive and well. In Dr. Luke’s classic divine understatement, they "were not a little comforted."

13 And we went before to ship, and sailed unto Assos, there intending to take in Paul: for so had he appointed, minding himself to go afoot.

Here is one of those interesting verses that actually inspires more questions than it answers. Apparently, Luke and the rest of Paul's company take ship at Troas and sail to Assos, which is about twenty miles by land almost directly across the peninsula from Troas. Paul chooses to walk across the peninsula by himself. McGarvey suggests Paul knows that hard times lie ahead and he "longed for a season of meditation and prayer which could only be found in solitude" (Vol. II 183).
14 And when he met with us at Assos, we took him in, and came to Mitylene.

The disciples meet Paul in Assos as planned and sail on to Mitylene, the capital of the island of Lesbos, located about thirty miles from Assos.

15 And we sailed thence, and came the next day over against Chios; and the next day we arrived at Samos, and tarried at Trogyllium; and the next day we came to Miletus.

Luke summarily reviews Paul’s return to Jerusalem without a waste of words. It is evident the brethren are traveling on a trading ship, making numerous stops along its route. Hurlbut supplies the geographical and historical information on these stops:

Chios is an island thirty-two miles long and five miles from Asia; it is said of have been the birth place of Homer (122).

Samos is an island near the mainland, forty-two miles southwest of Smyrna ... (122).

Trogyllium is a town and cape on the coast of Asia Minor ... The place at which the vessel anchored for the night is still called St. Paul's Port (122).

16 For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.

Paul is in a hurry to get on with his trip to Jerusalem that he might be there for Pentecost. Pentecost is a reunion of Jews from all over the world of that day. This great ingathering will give Paul the opportunity to preach to Jews literally from everywhere (for notes on Pentecost, see 2:1).
17 And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.

Paul's ship apparently has a layover of four or five days at the port city of Miletus. In order to take advantage of this time, Paul sends for the elders at Ephesus. Miletus was about thirty miles from Ephesus. (See notes on elders at 14:23.)

18 And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons,

These elders must have been some of the original members at Ephesus who have observed the labors of Paul from the first day he set foot in their city. Paul begins this sad farewell by calling to their minds the struggles he and they have been through for the sake of the gospel.

19 Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews:

Without arrogance or pride, Paul has discharged his apostolic and private responsibility to preach the gospel in the face of much opposition. Beginning with the setting forth of Alexander against him (19:33), the Jews have been a constant threat to Paul's work.

20 And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house,

And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you: Even in the face of such opposition, Paul declares he "kept back nothing that was profitable unto" them. Paul does not preach only that which may tickle their ears, but he preaches the whole "counsel of God" (verse 27).
but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house: There is a great lesson in this statement for all would-be soul winners. The gospel may be and should be taught in public (publicly) as Paul does in the schoolroom of Tyrannus (19:9). But the gospel also needs to be taught in private (house to house).

One of the greatest needs in the church of Christ today is personal evangelism. That is the teaching of the good news of Jesus on a one-on-one, face-to-face basis. We know the general population is not breaking down the doors of our buildings to hear the gospel preached from the pulpit. Many have the idea that if we have a gospel meeting or two during the year, we have met our responsibility to take the gospel to the lost. Our attitude is "Here it is; come and get it." It is obvious "they are not coming to get it." Therefore, the gospel must be taken to them by every individual Christian. While public teaching is restricted to men (1 Corinthians 14:34-35; 1 Timothy 2:11-12), the teaching of the gospel in private is a responsibility of both men and women. Where a woman is allowed to teach (in private), she may teach anyone (man, woman, child) (see notes on 18:26).

One will quickly find himself in a scriptural pickle when he attempts to give scriptural grounds for allowing a woman to teach in "Bible classes" or "Sunday school," which are not scriptural in and of themselves. One preacher, upon being asked, "Are your Bible classes public or private?" confidently replied, "Our Bible classes are public." The response was, "If your Bible classes are public, you have women teaching publicly which is a violation of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12." The preacher, a bit rattled at this point, quickly said, "Well, I guess our classes are private." He was then asked, "If your classes are private, will you allow a woman to teach a man's class?" He immediately replied, "No, a woman could not teach a man's class." Seeing his contradiction of scripture, he said, "I guess our classes are semi-private or maybe semi-public!" Ah, "the legs of the lame are not equal" (Proverbs 26:7)!
21 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul asserts to the elders that he preaches the same message to both Jews and Greeks. The words "repentance" and "faith" are not mentioned in chronological order. Paul's use of this arrangement seems to indicate that since we sin against God we repent "toward God" and have faith "toward" Jesus for salvation from sin. Repentance does not precede faith in the usual sense because this arrangement would require one to repent (change his life) before he even believes in God. Faith comes from a hearing of the word of God (Romans 10:17). The motivation of faith must occur in our hearts before repentance will take place in our lives (see notes on 13:39).

22 And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there:

There is some discussion as to the meaning of "bound in the spirit." Does this statement indicate Paul has decided to go to Jerusalem in his own spirit, or does it indicate a direct leading by the Holy Spirit? This writer prefers the explanation given by Lenski, which is a combination of the two thoughts:

An inward constraint urges Paul to go on. The fact that this does not refer merely to the decision of his own will, one that he could alter at any time, should be evident; the passive participle points to a higher agent that holds Paul bound to go to Jerusalem, an agent to whom Paul was wholly submissive in the direction of his life (841).
23 Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.

Paul admits he does not know what or who will be the source of fetters and calamities that await in Jerusalem, but he knows they will happen. The Holy Ghost’s witnessing to him in "every city" is not solely the result of the Holy Spirit's direct influence upon Paul, but this witnessing comes also from the mouths of such prophets as Agabus (21:10-11).

24 But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

Paul declares his total dedication to the preaching of the "gospel of the grace of God." Without reservation, he is willing to make the total sacrifice in order to give testimony of Jesus Christ. What we often fail to appreciate is the reality that wicked men can do nothing to the Christian. If the adversary takes the Christian’s life, he has accomplished no more than the loosing of his immortal soul from his mortal body that he might forever be with the Lord!

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing (2 Timothy 4:7-8).
25 And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more.

Here Paul is as "a spiritual father taking leave of his spiritual children" (Lenski 844). Whether Paul is ever again in the city of Ephesus is a point of much discussion (see additional notes at verse 38).

26 Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men.

27 For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

Because Paul has not failed to preach the gospel at every opportunity available and he has not hesitated "to declare all the counsel of God," he can say with confidence "I am pure from the blood of all men." Christians of today, take every opportunity to declare the gospel of Christ. Do not shrink from preaching the "whole counsel." It is not sufficient to obey a portion of the gospel; "all things" must be observed (Matthew 28:20). How will we stand in judgment day if some lost soul's blood is "required at our hand" (Ezekiel 3:18-21)?

28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

Take heed therefore unto yourselves: The primary requisite in being an effective leader in the Lord's church is to look first at one's own example. This admonition from Paul is just as valid today as it was on the day it was given to the elders of Ephesus.
**and to all the flock:** The good elder (overseer, bishop) must see to the needs of all his flock. There should be no distinction made in the rich or poor, young or old: "the true shepherd knows no dividing line, no factions, loves every one of the sheep, especially the weak and the needy" (Lenski 847).

**over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers:** Paul uses this statement to further emphasize the gravity of the office of an elder (overseer). These men, as are elders today, are "made overseers" by God's Holy Spirit. God did not leave the church in a state of anarchy but established a plan for the government of the church. The Holy Spirit reveals in God's word the qualifications to be met in order to implement this government (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9) (see notes on 14:23).

**to feed:** To see that the members of the church receive the necessary spiritual nourishment to allow them to function is a primary duty of the elders. Barnes says, "To feed, denotes not merely the duty of properly instructing the church but also of governing it; of securing it from enemies, (verse 29) and of directing its affairs so as to promote its edification and peace" (501).

**the church of God:** Paul continues to stress the important duties of the elders by reminding them the church over which they were made overseers is the "church of God." This is a very important statement as it affirms a basic tenet of Christianity: Jesus has absolute divinity. Jesus is God.
We need to remember, in general usage, there is no one named God. The term, God, is a "general appellation of deities or divinities" (Thayer 287-2-2316). Usually, when the term God is used in the scriptures, we understand it to be a reference to God the Father; but the reference may be indicating God the Son or God the Holy Spirit (John 1:1-3, 5:18-29, 15:26; Romans 1:4, 8:9; Philippians 2:6; Matthew 28:19). In this particular verse, it is not difficult to realize the term "church of God" refers to the church of Christ (the Son) because neither the Father nor the Spirit died (shed His blood) to "purchase the church."

**which he hath purchased with his own blood**: The elders are admonished that the church, over which they have oversight, required the blood of God (Jesus Christ) to bring it into existence. The price for the church of Christ is precious indeed; it required the blood of the "only begotten Son of God." If "No church ever saved anyone," or "You do not have to be a member of any church to be saved," as the religious hucksters of our day declare, then Christ died in vain! To the contrary, every member of the church has been bought with a price; that price is the blood of Christ (the Son of God). The church is made of these "blood bought" members; thus, the church is purchased with the blood of Christ (Romans 5:9; 1 Corinthians 6:20, 12:12; Ephesians 1:7). Note the excellent comments of Coffman:

No verse in the NT, nor any other statement that could be imagined, could possibly exceed the power of this in declaring the eternal importance and necessity of the church Christ established. Here the heretical notion of salvation "by faith alone" is shattered and countermanded forever. By any definition, salvation by "faith alone" means salvation without the church of Jesus Christ; and in such a view the crucifixion of our Lord is reduced to the status of a senseless murder. If men are saved, in any sense by the blood of Jesus, they must be saved, through the church of which that blood is here declared to be the purchase price. ... If one person can be saved without the church,
then all men may be saved; and such a proposition is emphatically contradicted and denied by Paul's words here (392-393).

(For additional information, see notes on 2:47).

29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

Apparently, the apostles are able to hold apostasy at arms' length while they are alive; but Paul foresees a disaster on the horizon. False teachers with their "doctrines of devils" will soon ravage the Lord's church as a bloodthirsty wolf would butcher a flock of sheep. Paul later affirms this same prediction with these sinister warnings: "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work" (2 Thessalonians 2:7) and ". . . some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils" (1 Timothy 4:1).

30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

Do not think because Paul drops the name of wolves that he is not speaking about the same type of men. "Men speaking perverse things" are also wolves. These are those who lose their respect for the authority of God's word and by the introduction of false doctrines, innovations, and various assorted and sundry heresies they tear and rent the Lord's church with schisms and sects.
When Paul says, "from among yourselves," the indication is the apostasy will have its beginning among those who are supposed to be guarding and protecting the flock, that being the elders themselves. This is exactly what happened! Because certain elders overstepped their scriptural bounds, the church was cast into apostasy. As some writers have said, "The Pope himself is only an elder gone wrong!"

With the twenty-twenty hindsight that history provides, we can see the results of these "grievous wolves." The church of Christ has been attacked on every hand by the pagans, the Catholics, the denominations, and modern innovators who have introduced such unscriptural practices as women teachers, instrumental music, multiple cups in the communion, and dividing the assembly into classes. But the immutable fact remains, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The church of Christ will be in existence when the last breath is drawn on this earth; it will never die (Matthew 16:18)!

31 Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

Sadly, the only thing Paul can leave with these elders is a warning "with tears." This warning, to remain faithful, must be made to ring again and again in the ears of God's people as it takes only one negligent generation that fails to be firmly grounded in the principles of God's word to bring eternal loss to the Lord's church. By the time of the writing of the book of Revelation, the church at Ephesus has "left her first love" (Revelation 2:4).
32 And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

**And now, brethren, I commend you to God:** This emotional speech to the elders is now tempered a bit with this pronouncement. "Commend," according to Vine, means "to put near, ... to place with someone, entrust," (Vol. I 210-211). Literally, Paul is committing the fate of these brethren to the care and keeping of God.

**And to the word of his grace:** If one is looking for a physical manifestation of God's grace, it may be seen in the written word of God. There are many definitions of God's grace, but the one preferred by this writer is grace is giving what is needed rather than what is deserved. Man, in his sin, deserves to die and be punished everlastingly; but that is not what he needs—he needs salvation. God, in His grace, gives what is needed, a means of salvation. This salvation is found in obedience to His word.

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation has appeared unto all men" (Titus 2:11). This salvation is made known in the word of his grace (Romans 1:16). Does this mean all men will be saved? Sadly, no, because "all men" will not accept God's word and obey it. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father..." (Matthew 7:21) (see also Matthew 7:13; Hebrews 5:9).
"The power unto salvation" is found in and accomplished by obedience to the "gospel of Christ" (Romans 1:16); yet as Coffman says:

> When all is said and done, the great gift of eternal redemption is a gift of the Father in heaven. Meeting the tests of faith, obeying the gospel, walking in the steps of Abraham's faith, etc., --however well men may obey, the great gift is yet a gift (394).

which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified: It is the word of God and only the word of God that can "build a person up" (edify) spiritually and make him an heir to the bounties of heaven. All the false doctrines, modern speculations, human theories, and philosophies of men provide no real answers to the needs of the hearts of men.

33 I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel.

Paul reminds the brethren that he has discharged his responsibility to labor among them without the motivation of material gain. This labor without remuneration certainly stands out in contrast to the modern religious extortionists who revel in opulence and excess.

34 Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.

It should not be understood that Paul is opposed to the financial support of those who preach the gospel. To the contrary, he is an advocate of "thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn" (1 Corinthians 9:6-14). Why Paul chooses to support himself during the work at Ephesus is left to speculation. Perhaps it is for the example of industry and charity mentioned in the next verse.
35 I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

I have shewed you all things: There is no better teacher than a good example. Paul demonstrates his teaching by working with his hands to support not just himself but those brethren in need.

how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak: It is the responsibility of able-bodied Christian men to work to support their families and to have sufficient to assist others (Ephesians 4:28; 1 Timothy 5:8).

The weak are those who, because of illness or accidents, are unable to provide for themselves. Paul rarely misses an opportunity to express compassion for the weak. One of the main reasons for his trip to Jerusalem on this occasion is to bring a collection for the "poor saints."

and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive: It is of interest to note that this statement attributed to the Lord is not recorded in any of the gospels. "It is more blessed to give than to receive" was one of those precious morsels of divine truth, of which thousands fell from his lips that are not recorded in our brief gospels"(McGarvey, Vol. II 193).
In this selfish "me" generation of which we are a part, the word "give" is a foreign concept; yet this word is the very glory of heaven. God is the greatest Giver in that "he gave his only begotten Son" (John 3:16). The life of Jesus is an example of giving right down to the ultimate sacrifice of His on life for the salvation of man (Romans 5:8). This giving must go own in our lives, prompted by a genuine love for the physical and spiritual welfare of others.

36 And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all.

How sad it must have been for Paul to know the dangers that are to be thrust upon this congregation--a congregation that he has suffered with, cried with, rejoiced with, and spent himself to establish. He knows he is leaving this church quite literally with the "grievous wolves" at the door. The contents of Paul's prayer are not revealed, but we can be assured Almighty God is petitioned with an ardent plea for the preservation and continuation of the church at Ephesus.

37 And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him,
38 Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship.

The pent-up emotions of this gathering now break out in an emotional display over the words of Paul. In particular, these disciples sorrow to think they will not see Paul again. Lenski says:

Sorrowing" is too weak a translation; the participle means "pained," "deeply distressed"; and brings out the thought that now, in a few moments, they would behold him no more, "behold" not merely "see"; their eyes would not again rest upon him (857).
Goodbyes are but one of the many heartaches of mortal human beings. Whether Paul ever
goes back to Ephesus or not really is not the concern here. It is a fact that once a crowd of
any size is broken up, the odds are astronomical the same crowd can never be reassembled at
some later date. Paul and this group of men realize the time has come to say goodbye. The
only cure for this mortal heartache is heaven, where partings come not.

The good brethren of Ephesus accompany Paul as far as the seaport at Miletus, and there
they sadly watch as he sails out of their lives, gone but never to be forgotten. "The greatest of
all human preachers was on the way to prison, and eventually to death; and those whom he
loved watered the occasion with their tears" (Coffman 396).
Chapter 21

In spite of the prophetic warnings of his friends, Paul continues his trip to Jerusalem, which will mark the conclusion of his third missionary journey (1-15). In Jerusalem Paul is mobbed in the temple and rescued by Roman soldiers, beginning a saga of pursuits and escapes from the Jews that will reach epic proportions (17-40).

1 And it came to pass, that after we were gotten from them, and had launched, we came with a straight course unto Coos, and the day following unto Rhodes, and from thence unto Patara:

And it came to pass, that after we were gotten from them, and had launched: It is with great reluctance that Paul makes a tearful departure from the elders of Ephesus. Vincent says the words, "gotten from" have a stronger, more emotional meaning, "having torn ourselves away" (563).

We came with a straight course unto Coos: Paul and his party continue their journey of benevolence on a small boat known as a "coaster." This type of ship rarely ventures into open sea but rather travels from seaport to seaport usually in sight of the land. "The straight run of which Luke makes note by using a nautical term shows how favorable the first day's wind was" (Lenski 860).

Coos, an island about forty miles south of Miletus, is famous for wine and silk fabrics. Reece says, "a great medical school was located there" (558).
and the day following unto Rhodes: The second day’s travel takes them to the famous island of Rhodes, some fifty miles southeast of Coos. Rhodes is known for its cultivation of roses from which it receives its name. One of the most famous attractions for which Rhodes is known is the Colossus of Rhodes.

One of the seven wonders of the ancient world, a giant bronze statue astride the harbor on its eastern extremity. It stood 105' high, having been erected by Chares of Lindus in 300 B.C. After standing only 56 years, it was tumbled and fragmented by an earthquake in 244 B.C.; but the ruins of this enormous wonder were finally sold as scrap metal to a Jewish dealer in 656 A.D., who required 900 camels to transport the remains (Coffman 397-398).

and from thence unto Patara: Not much is to be said about the harbor of Patara. It is a stopping point for vessels on the coast of Lycia about fifty miles east of Rhodes.

2 And finding a ship sailing over unto Phenicia, we went aboard, and set forth.

It is here at Patara that Paul and company have the good fortune of finding a ship bound directly for Tyre. They leave the port-hopping "coaster" and board what is evidently a larger more seaworthy merchant ship that is bound for the Phoenician coast, a trip of about four hundred miles (see 11:19 for notes on Phenice).
3 Now when we had discovered Cyprus, we left it on the left hand, and sailed into Syria, and landed at Tyre: for there the ship was to unladen her burden.

These ancient sailors are sailing southeast across the Mediterranean Sea. Luke uses the nautical term "discovered," which "literally means to bring to light; and its use here is analogous to the English marine phrase, to raise land" (Vincent 564). By the sighting of the island of Cyprus on "the left hand" (north), they know they are on course (for notes on Cyprus, see 4:36).

Tyre is the final destination of this ship. It is here that her cargo is to be unloaded. "Tyre an ancient Phoenician city is located on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea, twenty miles from Sidon and twenty-three miles from Acre" (Unger 1121). The city was spoken of as "a crowning city, whose merchants are princes, whose traffickers are the honorable of the earth" (Isaiah 23:8) (see also 12:20).

4 And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.

And finding disciples: That a church of Christ is in the city of Tyre is made evident by this statement. Vincent says, "The verb means to discover after search ... The verb might be rendered strictly by our common phrase, having looked up the disciples" (564). It is bound to have been a great source of satisfaction to Paul and the brethren who accompany him to be able to "look up the brethren" in these strange and far-flung cities they visit. How there comes to be a congregation of brethren in Tyre is explained in Acts 11:19 and 15:3.
we tarried there seven days: This stay of seven days gives the disciples the opportunity to observe the Lord's supper with the church at Tyre. The divine pattern for the observing of the Lord's supper is recorded in Acts 20:7. It is "upon the first day of the week" that the Lord's church assembles to "break bread." Later, this same practice will be noted at Puteoli (Acts 28:14).

who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem: Some of the brethren at Tyre have received, by revelation from the Holy Spirit, warnings of the dangers that await Paul at Jerusalem. Because of their love and concern for Paul's welfare, they exhort him not to go to Jerusalem. This should not be understood as an order from the Holy Spirit to prohibit Paul from going to Jerusalem but rather a warning so that he might be prepared for what awaits him (compare with 20:23).

5 And when we had accomplished those days, we departed and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed.

In this verse, Luke repeats the account of the sad scene that takes place when Paul leaves the brethren standing on the shore at Miletus (20:36-38). Entire families turned out to bid the apostle and his company Godspeed. It is fitting that Luke notes the devotion of these Christians. They know hardships lie ahead for their beloved Paul; therefore, they humble themselves before the God whom they worship in common and invoke His blessings.
6 And when we had taken our leave one of another, we took ship; and they returned home again.

The short sojourn with the faithful at Tyre is now over, and the appropriate goodbyes have been said. Paul and the disciples settle into the ship for a destination that will hold many unexpected hardships. The good brethren of Tyre return home. "I can read into the closing words of Luke a certain loneliness that he must have felt... But they returned home again" (De Welt 278).

They went home with wife and child; but Luke and Paul went to the savage mob in Jerusalem, and chains, and long waiting for justice that never came, and at last a voyage that led to a shipwreck on Malta, and the military barracks in Rome (Coffman 400).

7 And when we had finished our course from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, and saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day.

Ptolemais is a city located on the Mediterranean coast about thirty miles south of Tyre. In the Old Testament, this city was known as Accho (Judges 1:31). Later, the city was conquered by one of the Ptolemais of Egypt and named after him. The modern city bears the name Acre. There is a church of Christ in ancient Ptolemais and, as in Tyre, the disciples "look up" the brethren and spend one day with them. It is very possible Philip, of whom more will be said in following verses, established this congregation.
8 And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him.

And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: This is Paul's third visit to Caesarea (see notes on 9:30).

and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him: Paul takes the opportunity for rest and refreshment by going into the house of a fellow evangelist whose name is Philip. We can rest assured no introduction is necessary between these men. Philip is, as Paul, a good soldier for the cause of Christ. The scriptures indicate, after Philip's great work in Samaria (Acts 8), that he establishes churches up and down the coast in the region around Caesarea, which likely includes the just mentioned churches at Tyre and Ptolemais (8:40). This is our last opportunity to look in on the life of this great preacher who turns the heart of Simon the sorcerer to Jesus and sends the gospel to Ethiopia by way of the queen's treasurer. He is spoken of no more in holy writ. To know more, we will have to wait for the great reunion in heaven.

Luke takes pains to distinguish this Philip so that his identity is assured. Luke identifies Philip as "the evangelist" who is also "one of the seven" of chapter six. This is reference to Philip's being one of the seven men chosen to settle the problems between the Greek and Hebrew widows (see notes on 6:1-6). "This title, 'evangelist' was given to those who went from place to place proclaiming the gospel, such preachers were ranked after apostles and prophets and above pastors and teachers in Ephesians 4:12" (Coffman 401).
9 And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.

And the same man had four daughters: It is apparent Philip has lived a full life in the twenty some years since he evangelized Samaria and baptized the eunuch (Acts 8). Luke here mentions Philip's four daughters for whom any father could be thankful.

virgins: The fact they are referred to as "virgins" simply indicates they are unmarried and has no religious significance. One thing it does indicate is that these girls by being unmarried can devote their full attention to the Lord's work.

There is no suggestion in this passage that there is such a thing as an order of "virgins" in the church. This idea is invented at a much later date by the Catholic church and has no scriptural basis.

which did prophesy: To “prophesy,” according to Vine, "signifies the speaking forth of the mind and counsel of God" (Vol. III 221). These women are able to teach the word of God by inspiration. They are not and should not be confused with the "prophets" mentioned as an office in the church (1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11). Like Miriam (Exodus 15:20) and Deborah (Judges 4:4) of Old Testament times, these righteous women are an asset to the disciples of Jesus Christ.

Did these daughters of Philip teach in the public assemblies of the church? The answer is no. According to the scriptures, women are not allowed to speak in the assemblies of the church (1 Corinthians 14:34; 1 Timothy 2:12). Where a woman is allowed to teach, which is in a private capacity, she may teach anyone (man, woman, or child); but where a woman may not teach, which is a public capacity, she may not teach anyone (see notes on 18:26; 20:20).
This miraculous ability to prophesy by inspiration from God is predicted by Joel (see notes on 2:17-18) and comes to an end when the New Testament is totally revealed ("that which is perfect is come") (1 Corinthians 13:8-10).

10 And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus:

This is the second time we have had Agabus appear on the scene, and on both occasions he has been the foreseer of bad news. In his first appearance (11:28), he predicts the famine that occurs during the reign of Claudius; now he foretells the bonds awaiting Paul in Jerusalem. (For additional notes on prophets, see 11:27.)

11 And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.

And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet: Agabus, in a graphic display that cannot be misunderstood, demonstrates the bonds and imprisonment that await the apostle. This symbolic demonstration illustrates, by the binding of hands, that Paul will not be allowed to work as he has, and by binding his feet that he will be restricted in going where he wants. It appears to have been a common thing for the prophets to act out or portray their prophecies (1 Kings 22:11; Jeremiah 13:1-7; Ezekiel 4:1-6).

The "girdle" refers to the belt or sash, commonly worn to gather the loose outer garment at the waist.
and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost: The message that Agabus is about to deliver is a direct quotation from the Holy Spirit.

So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles: The picture prophecy is now further clarified by this example of verbal inspiration given by the Holy Spirit. It will be the Jews who will be responsible for the binding of Paul; but because the Romans have legal jurisdiction in Judea, he will be delivered to the Gentiles for trial.

12 And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.

It is very possible that the companions of Paul have said little or nothing about the predictions concerning Paul's fate until now. But with the Holy Spirit’s warning of danger in Miletus (20:23), the warning given by the brethren at Tyre (21:4), and now the dramatic revelation of Agabus, the disciples are moved to speak up. Luke, the brethren traveling with Paul, Philip, his four daughters, and others who have gathered at Philip’s house now plead with Paul not to go to Jerusalem.

13 Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.

Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart: Paul is deeply touched by the obvious love and concern for his welfare demonstrated by his friends. "The word for 'breaking' means 'to breakup' or 'to pound,' and was often used of the practice of washing clothes by pounding them with stones" (Gaertner 332).
for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus: Paul will never turn aside from the path of obedience and duty. He is willing not only to be "bound" but also to give the ultimate sacrifice, his life. We must appreciate his conviction to stand against the strong persuasion of friends to do what he believes is God's will.

14 And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.

It is likely the words, "The will of the Lord be done," do not mean the disciples are now convinced it is the Lord's will that Paul go to Jerusalem. But rather when Paul's friends see there is no hope to dissuade him of his intentions to go, they resign themselves to the consequences by saying "the Lord's will be done."

With the 20/20 vision provided by hindsight, we are made to wonder if it truly is God's will that Paul go to Jerusalem. Paul stands contrary to the advice of Luke, Philip, and Philip's four daughters, all of whom are also inspired as well as Paul. Luke does not tell us the reason for Paul's apparent obsession to go to Jerusalem. We might speculate he wants to deliver the collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem, hoping to create a bond between the Jewish brethren and their Gentile counterparts. Could not Luke and the brethren who carry the collection have made the delivery? The fiasco that occurs as a result of the ill-fated plan of James and the binding of Paul could have been avoided, at least this time.
On the other hand, it is also possible that Paul's friends allow the emotion of the situation to influence their good judgment and perhaps even to cause them to resist the will of God. If this is the case, we must admire the noble apostle in his steadfastness and his firmness to "let the will of the Lord be done!" Perhaps we are a bit shortsighted in not seeing the benefits of Paul's impending imprisonment.

The road is opened to Rome and to Caesar and to "the palace and all other places" left for Paul's ministry.... So the gospel gains fresh wings, and that grace of God which lovingly overrules where perhaps it was not allowed to rule, is made known to vaster numbers, and amongst them to some whom it might not have reached in any other way (Hervey, Vol. II 187).

15 And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem.

After the time spent in Philip's house, the disciples took up our carriages “...baggage, things necessary for a journey” (Vine, Vol. I 95) and make the fateful trip to Jerusalem.

16 There went with us also certain of the disciples of Caesarea, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge.

There went with us also certain of the disciples of Caesarea: After it becomes apparent Paul is "packed up" and going to Jerusalem, some of the brethren at Caesarea join him and the eight other disciples (20:4) with him for the sixty-mile trip.
and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge: Luke leaves us little information on this elderly saint, Mnason, but we can assume he is a man of some wealth to live in Cyprus and also to maintain a house in Jerusalem large enough to provide lodging for the considerable company now traveling with Paul.

17 And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.

This verse marks the end of Paul's third missionary journey. Churches have been established in Asia Minor, established congregations have been visited and encouraged, and letters have been written to strengthen the young churches. Paul has returned to Jerusalem in time for the Pentecost, as is his desire (20:16). This point also marks a dramatic change in the life of this great apostle to the Gentiles. No longer will he be a free man to travel at will among the churches. His fate is sealed; Paul will soon be on the road that will lead to Rome.

"This was the fifth time that Paul had visited Jerusalem, since he set out against the brethren at Damascus" (Campbell 142). Paul's previous entries into Jerusalem have provoked a diversity of receptions, but the glad reception of the brethren this time belies the calamities that await.

18 And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present.

Contrary to the modern concept of church hierarchy, conceived by the Catholic church and adopted by many in the denominational world, James is not here presented as some special "bishop" or as an "archbishop" with rule over the church in Jerusalem. This James is the half-brother of Jesus and an apostle in the secondary sense (he was not one of the original twelve) (Galatians 1:19). We are left to wonder where Peter and the rest of the apostles are? If they
are in Jerusalem, surely they would have been at this meeting. (For additional notes on apostles, see 14:4.)

19 And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry.

After Paul's customary greeting and, we can assume, the delivery of the collection for the poor saints, he begins his speech. As Paul has informed the elders at Antioch (14:27), he now recounts the successes of the gospel to the elders at Jerusalem. All teachers of the gospel should note that Paul realizes he is nothing more than an instrument of God.

20 And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law:

And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him: The Jerusalem elders express their heartfelt joy at the success of the gospel by giving God the praise, but they have another matter that is a burden on their minds: trouble looms large on the horizon.

Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe: The elders begin to unburden their minds by calling to Paul's attention the myriads of Jews in Jerusalem who have been converted to Christianity. It is not difficult for one to feel the tension in this situation. The elders are fearful Paul will "tear up their nest" if he teaches the truth about the Christian's responsibility toward the Law.
and they are all zealous of the law: It is incredible that such a statement can even be made considering the fact that it has been twenty-five years since the establishment of the church. How is it possible that these Jewish Christians do not understand the differences in the Old Testament and the New Testament?

They still observe the Law of Moses. The reference here is to the Law respecting circumcision, sacrifices, distinctions of meats and days, festivals, etc. It may seem remarkable that they should still continue to observe those rites, since it was the manifest design of Christianity to abolish them (Barnes 505).

It is likely that we today fail to appreciate the hold the Law had upon the Jewish Christians. They have been trained all of their lives, before the coming of Christianity, in the faithful observation of the Law. It does cause one to wonder how much effort has been made by the Jerusalem elders to teach the truth in regard to the Law (Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 8:6-10, 10:1-4).

It apparently takes the providence of God to end this extreme attachment to the Law. The destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and the subsequent destruction of the temple will bring closure to Jewish worship as it once was. Coffman gives us this note:

The Lord knew that the hold of its forms and sacrifices would have such a force upon all the Jews, that rather than their being able to tear away from them, God would tear them away from the Jews (406).
21 And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs.

And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses: These Jewish Christians have heard from other Jewish Christians from outside Jerusalem that Paul teaches the Law of Moses is not necessary for salvation. We are made to wonder why the Jerusalem Christians have not also been taught in this matter?

saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs: This is a malicious lie; these accusations are not true. Paul does not forbid circumcision; rather he teaches that the condition of being circumcised or of being uncircumcised matters not for one's salvation.

For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love (Galatians 5:6).

Concerning "the customs," Paul makes no restrictions upon the ceremonial Law as long as it is not taught as a requirement of salvation. The error made by the Jerusalem elders and the majority of the church is in their conclusion that God has two plans for salvation. One plan is for the Jews, which includes the gospel of Christ and the keeping of the Law. A second plan is for the Gentiles, which is the gospel of Christ without the requirement to keep the Law. The only exception to this second plan is the Gentile Christians are to "abstain from pollution of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled and from blood" (15:20). As here noted, the roots for this misunderstanding are found in the conclusion of the meeting that Paul has with the apostles and elders at Jerusalem on an earlier occasion (see notes on 15:1-22).
22 What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come.

What is to be done? The multitude will most certainly hear of the arrival of Paul and something must be done to assuage the anger of these "Law-keeping Christians." Do we detect a little panic in this question?

23 Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them;

James and the elders are not without a plan. They outline a scheme they hope will appease "those of the circumcision" (11:2, 15:1) and the rest of those "zealous of the Law."

The plan is to be based upon four men, apparently members of the Jerusalem church, who are in the process of completing a vow. It is generally agreed that this vow is the Nazarite vow (Numbers 6:1-21).

24 Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law.

Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads: James and the elders urge Paul to join in with the four men who are under the vow, thus purifying himself and paying for the necessary sacrifices as required ("be at charges with them"). It is quite amazing and very difficult to explain why Paul would ever consider such an ill-conceived plan. To observe the requirements of the Nazarite vow, one has to refrain from all products of the grape, which would preclude Paul’s observing the Lord's
supper, and it also required the sacrifice of a lamb for a "sin offering" (Numbers 6:14) (see notes on 18:18). Who can believe that Paul would disregard two major concepts in the doctrine of Christ for such a plan?

Coffman offers this quotation from Adam Clarke, which is also the conclusion of this writer:

However we may consider this subject, it is exceedingly difficult to account for the conduct of James and the elders, and of Paul on this occasion. There seems to be something in this transaction which we do not fully understand (408).

and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law: The ultimate purpose of this elaborate plan is to show the multitude of "Christian Law-keepers" that Paul is one of them! If these "Law-keepers" can observe Paul "keeping the Law," perhaps they will not believe the rumors about Paul's teaching an end to the Law; and a tumult can be avoided.

The situation that is being proposed by James and the Jerusalem elders is an appalling example of "too little, too late!" It appears evident the leaders of the church in Jerusalem have not taught and enforced the "whole counsel" of God's word. Is it not interesting that this multitude of Jewish brethren who are willing to oppose Paul to the death have no problems with the teaching of James and the elders? These Jewish Christian "Law-keepers" should have been told that they are no longer keepers of the Law of Moses. "As Wesley said, James should have told those Jewish Christians: I do not keep the Law of Moses; neither does Peter; neither need any of you!" (Coffman 406).
Paul finds himself caught up in a dilemma for which there is no good solution. This plan is doomed from the beginning because there are Jewish Christians in Jerusalem who know exactly what Paul has taught about the Christian and his relationship to the Law (Galatians 2:16-21; 3:11-24; 5:4; Colossians 2:14). We know Paul keeps some of the Jewish customs in a patriotic sense and for the purpose of being allowed entrance into the synagogues. He even shaves his head in some type of a vow as noted in chapter eighteen. But Paul always makes it clear that such customs and ceremonies have nothing to do with salvation. Why he joins this plan as described by James is unexplained. Paul's explanation might have been:

And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; (1 Corinthians 9:20).

Perhaps in the name of peace and harmony, a compromise is allowed these Jewish converts. They are allowed to hold on to those ceremonies and rituals that are considered as Christian liberties as long as they do not bind them as essential for salvation. Compromise can be useful and right as long as the truth is not sacrificed; but, as is exemplified here, compromise is often a way to put off an impending problem that will have to be dealt with eventually.

Let us hear the conclusion of this matter by using a summary provided by Coffman:

Was it right for him to make such a proposition to Paul? and was it right for Paul to concur in it? This writer simply does not dare to offer a dogmatic answer. It is believed, of course, that both James and Paul did what, under the circumstances, they truly believed to be right; but evidently both of them were caught in a net of circumstances where anything they might have done would have had elements of error in it (407).
25 As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication.

This assurance seems to have been added as further inducement to get Paul's cooperation. Paul need not worry about his Gentile brethren because James and the elders are saying they will never enforce the commands of the Law upon them. Of course, this concession would have been only a momentary stopgap as we can be certain this Pharisaic party in the Lord's church would soon have been requiring "Law-keeping" of the Gentile Christians also (see notes on 15:28-29).

The very purpose for Paul's bringing the collection to the poor saints at Jerusalem, besides the obvious benevolent reason, is to attempt to form a bond between the Jewish Christians and their Gentile brothers. It is evident, by the transpiring events, that the desired bond is not going to happen. Instead, these Judaizing Christians have the concept of two forms of Christianity: one for the Jews, which involves keeping the Law, and a second for the Gentiles, who are not required to keep the Law.

26 Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them.

It looks as if the plan of the elders is going to work. It has been almost seven days since Paul entered into the temple to join himself to the four men. “Seven days had to elapse before a Nazarite who had contracted such defilement could be purified: such a man shaved his head on the seventh day and brought his offering on the eighth day...” (Bruce 430-431).
27 And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him,

The entire week has almost passed without incident. It appears the plan is going to work until certain of the "Jews of Asia" discover Paul in the temple. These are most likely some of the same Jews who are led by Demetrius to harass and pursue Paul in Ephesus (19:24; 20:19). This group of Jewish rabble-rousers cries out as if they have just spied Beelzebub in the flesh and lay hold of Paul as if he is some notorious criminal. From this point in Paul's life, he is never free again. He will soon be rescued by the Romans to spend the remainder of his life as their prisoner.

28 Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place.

The impassioned cries of these venomous Jews serve to incite the emotions of the crowd. The charges named against Paul are all false; but because of the volatile attitude of Paul's adversaries, it is doubtful if anyone gives much thought to calling for an investigation.

29 (For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.)

Luke seems to realize the futility of attempting to refute the lies of the mob; therefore, he gives explanation for only one of the false charges. "They supposed" are the key words here. Evidently, because someone has seen Trophimus in company with Paul, "they supposed" that Trophimus, a Gentile, has been taken into a part of the temple that is forbidden to the Gentiles. This is all based upon the false premise that anyone seen with Paul in the city is also with him
in the temple. It is also very possible that this is not just a mistake but rather a cleverly contrived lie to agitate the people further.

30 And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut.

These Jewish henchmen have sought opportunity to murder Paul for sometime. Now it appears the chance has come. A mob quickly forms, Paul is dragged out of the temple, and his death looks certain, but it is not to be. God is not yet finished with Paul's life on earth; by His providence Paul will be spared, for now.

31 And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar.

The intentions of this mob are plain. It is their purpose to kill Paul. Someone, whom we are unable to ascertain, alerts the Roman soldiers who are quartered in the tower or fortress of Antonia. Unger gives the following information on this tower:

Antonia, a strong fortress built and named by Herod in honor of Antonius, or Mark Anthony, situated to the N.W. of the temple area in Jerusalem, partly surrounded by a deep ditch one hundred and sixty-five feet wide. It was garrisoned with Roman soldiers, whose watchfulness preserved order in the temple courts (70).

The "chief captain" is the Roman commander over one thousand troops or one tenth of a legion. We learn the name of this particular chief captain is Claudius Lysias (23:26).
32 Who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them: and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul.

The fortress of Antonia is joined to the outer court of the temple by two flights of stairs. When the Romans get news of the ensuing tumult, a minimum of two hundred of Rome's elite soldiers rush to Paul's rescue (we conclude since the word centurion is plural and each centurion is commander of one hundred soldiers, this action involved at least two hundred men) (see notes on 10:1).

This riot is not to be allowed by the Roman peacekeepers. When the soldiers, led by the chief captain himself, charge down upon this crowd, the heavy hand of Rome brings control over a mob that is out of control and saves Paul's life.

33 Then the chief captain came near, and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and demanded who he was, and what he had done.

With this action, Paul becomes a prisoner of the Roman government. For approximately the next five years, Paul will be passed from one Roman official to the next, beginning in Caesarea and ending in Rome. It is during this time that Paul fulfills the prophecy that he would "bear the Lord's name before kings" (see notes on 9:15).

The fact that Paul is bound with "two chains" indicates a case of mistaken identification. The chief captain believes they have captured some infamous criminal, as will be noted in verse 38.
34 And some cried one thing, some another, among the multitude: and when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the castle.

In response to the chief captain's demand, "who he was, and what had he done," the crowd shouts "one thing, some another." As is usually the case when mob mentality takes over, it is doubtful if the majority of this frenzied crowd even knows what is really happening. It quickly becomes obvious to this man of authority that he will get no satisfactory answer from the crowd; therefore, he takes Paul into the castle (the tower of Antonia).

35 And when he came upon the stairs, so it was, that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the people.

This is a mob with a vengeance. The soldiers find it necessary to carry Paul up the steps to the tower to protect him from the violent intentions of the mob.

36 For the multitude of the people followed after, crying, Away with him.

This vicious mass of humanity has one common goal: they are howling for Paul's blood. This is reminiscent of a mob of the same flavor who clamored "Let him be crucified" (Matthew 27:22).

37 And as Paul was to be led into the castle, he said unto the chief captain, May I speak unto thee? Who said, Canst thou speak Greek?

The talent that Paul has to be able to defuse the most volatile of situations now shows itself. With all the military protocol necessary and in the polished language of an obviously educated man, Paul makes a request to speak to the chief captain. With this simple request, made in
the Greek language, Paul immediately causes the chief captain to have doubts about the assumed identity of his captive.

38 Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers?

The commander now expresses his confusion as to Paul's identity by asking Paul if he is a notorious "Egyptian" who led an insurrection against the Romans. It is no wonder the chiliarch (the commander of a thousand men) has Paul bound in double chains: he thinks he has captured the leader of the "dagger-men": "assassins" who plotted a murderous insurrection.

His reference was to an incident also reported by Josephus. Three years earlier an Egyptian had arrived in Jerusalem promising the Jews that the walls of Jerusalem would tumble down if they joined him on the Mount of Olives. He claimed that God would lead the Jews to victory over the Romans. Josephus says that 30,000 people followed him. Felix the procurator put an end to the adventure, however, sending troops who killed 400 of the rebels, took another 200 prisoners, and the rest fled. The Egyptian managed to disappear (Gaertner 341-342).

39 But Paul said, I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and, I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people.

But Paul said, I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia: Paul begins to explain to the chief captain who he is. It is well to note that Paul does not yet reveal his Roman citizenship.
a citizen of no mean city: According to Vine the word "mean" literally means "without mark, undistinguished, obscure" (Vol. III 50). Paul is saying he does not come from some obscure, unheard of city but rather he finds his roots in the notable city of Tarsus (see notes on 9:1).

and, I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people: The indefatigable spirit, the amazing fortitude, and the tenacious drive of the Apostle Paul are seen in this request. He has barely escaped this murderous mob of Jews; yet he desires to take advantage of this most hostile of situations to preach God's word! May his tribe increase!

40 And when he had given him licence, Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew tongue, saying,

It is certain we cannot imagine nor fully appreciate the scene that now appears. Paul is given permission to address the Jews. He steps forward on the stairs that provide him some elevation above the crowd; and then with a gesture so very characteristic of Paul (12:17; 13:16; 26:1), a great hush falls over this gathering. Now this subdued mob hear the words of this great man of God ring out in their native tongue.

Dear reader, this is the place to take a deep breath and enjoy this astounding silence as we prepare for Paul's sermon and the inevitable renewed hysteria of the Jewish mob who will not be placated until Paul is dead.
Chapter 22

From the steps of the Roman fortress, with a calmness that permeates this vast audience, Paul gives a characteristic motion of his hand (21:40) and begins his defense in the Hebrew tongue (2). In an attempt to clarify who he is and the circumstances that brought him to this point, Paul recites the history of his life both before and after his conversion. It quickly becomes apparent that Paul's speech has no impact on these murderous Jews. To protect himself from the Jews and the Roman soldiers, Paul claims his rights as a Roman citizen (25).

1 Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence which I make now unto you.

The addressing of "Men, brethren, fathers" is an ordinary salutation to a Hebrew audience. The term "brethren" is used in a national sense. To lend a bit more to this choice of words, it is interesting to note that this is the same greeting used by Stephen when he stands in a similar predicament before the Jewish court (7:2).

2 (And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith,)

The fact that Paul speaks in the "Hebrew tongue" (Aramaic) rather than Greek must have caught the Jews off guard; it, no doubt, pleases them in spite of who the speaker is. "Aramaic was not only the vernacular of Palestinian Jews, but was the common speech of all non-Greek speakers in western Asia..." (Coffman 418). Paul, the master of circumstances, has set a most dramatic scene for his presentation. Lenski gives the following description of the situation giving focus to our imagination:
Luke wants us to catch the contrast: a moment ago the roar of an enraged mob, this moment, after a single sentence from Paul's lips, absolute silence. Visualize the scene; few of a more dramatic nature are found even in the New Testament. What was passing through the mind of the chiliarch as he eyed Paul and glanced at the crowds and yet understood not a word of what the apostle said?

3 I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day.

For an introduction, Paul gives the audience his most impressive credentials.

**I am verily a man which am a Jew:** Paul states he is a Jew by birth, "circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews" (Philippians 3:5).

**born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia:** See notes on Acts 21:39.

**yet brought up in this city:** Lenski makes this observation: the term "born" means "nourished up" and thus "reared" while the word "brought up" means "to train a child" (901). Paul is telling these Jews he was born abroad, yet he was educated in Jerusalem.

**at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers:** To mention "Gamaliel" as the source of one's education in those days is akin to being a graduate of Harvard, Yale, or some other prestigious college of our day. Paul has the ultimate in education (for additional information on Gamaliel, see 5:34). (For more extensive notes on Paul's cultural and educational background, see notes on 9:1.)
and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day: Paul uses the utmost in diplomacy with this statement. He tells these Jews that as they now are, he one time was.

I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth (Acts 26:9).

4 And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.

We dare not miss the poignant fact that this information reveals. A person can be wellborn, well educated, religious, taught in the scriptures, honest, sincere, "zealous toward God," and yet be a persecutor of Jesus and an enemy of truth.

(See 9:2 for notes on "this way.")

5 As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished.

Paul states that he himself was once a bitter enemy of "this way" and was empowered by the high priest and the Sanhedrin court to bind and punish the followers of Jesus Christ. "Some in the audience, Paul’s old companions in persecution, and subsequent enemies, knew all the facts here recited, but they were unknown to the majority of the crowd..." (McGarvey, Vol. II 215). (See notes on 9:2.)
6 And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. 7 And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

The record that Luke gives here corresponds with his original account given in chapter nine with a few variations. Therefore, the reader is advised to read the notes given in 9:3-18 for the majority of the comments about these verses.

In these verses, the only difference in the version given in chapter nine is the time is stated, "about noon." Any light that would stand out against the brilliant noonday sun of the Syrian desert would not be mistaken as some natural event.

8 And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. 9 And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.

Here is a variation that the enemies of God's word have latched on to and tried to make it into a contradiction. In Luke's record in Acts 9:7, he says, the men "hearing a voice"; but here "they heard not the voice." A detailed explanation is given in Acts 9:7.
10 And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.

11 And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus.


12 And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there,

Here Paul makes a special note, for the benefit of these Jews, concerning Ananias when he says, "Ananias, a devout man according to the law." That Ananias has been a "devout" Jew is a fact, but it is also a fact that Ananias has been converted to Christianity.

13 Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him.

14 And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.

15 For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.

The fact that Ananias calls Saul “brother” is not indicating Saul is a “brother in Christ” because Saul is not yet “in Christ.” One must be baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:27). Saul is the brother of Ananias only in the nationalistic sense: they are both Jewish (see notes on 9:15-17).
16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins: The urgent necessity for baptism is emphasized by Ananias. The reason for the urgency is clear: until a person is baptized he will remain a sinner! It is a common practice in denominational churches to hold baptismal candidates until the end of the meeting, or they baptize once a month or once a year. The reason for delay is they see no spiritual value in baptism. They baptize as "an outward sign that the person has already been saved" or to allow one to "join their church." Is it not ironic? It is more difficult to "join" some denominations than it is to be saved! There is no excuse for this mistake. It is clearly seen here that baptism is necessary to "wash away thy sins." (See more extensive notes at 2:38; 9:18; 16:32-33.)

Nothing is more clearly taught in the NT than the fact of baptism being `unto the remission of sins,' and that it is not to be despised as in any manner unessential, optional, or discretionary for those who truly wish to be saved (Coffman 424).

calling on the name of the Lord: To "call on the name of the Lord" involves more than simply saying, “Jesus, save me” or “I accept Jesus as my personal savior.” To call on the name of the Lord must include doing what the Lord says for us to do.

And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say (Luke 6:46)?

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven (Matthew 7:21).
In this particular case, Conybeare and Howson suggest the "calling on the name of the Lord" "is reference to the confession of faith in Jesus which preceded baptism" (639). (See Matthew 10:32; Romans 10:10.) (See notes on 2:21; 8:37.)

17 And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance;

18 And saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me.

Luke does not record this fact in the original narrative. We learn that after Paul's conversion and his subsequent return to Jerusalem, Jesus appears to him in a vision ("trance") and instructs him to make all "haste" to leave Jerusalem (9:26).

19 And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee:

20 And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.

It is a most interesting thought to imagine Paul, in his zeal to evangelize the Jews, making a protest to the Lord; yet this seems to have been the case. Evidently Paul thinks by telling the Jews how he himself at one time had been the chief adversary of Jesus Christ, even consenting to the death of the first Christian martyr, perhaps the Jews would see that his conversion is genuine and listen to his words.
21 And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.

At this time it is clear Paul does not fully appreciate the intense hatred the Jews have for him. The Jews look upon Paul as a traitor to their cause, so they want nothing to do with him except to put him to death. At the insistence of Jesus, Paul escapes Jerusalem with his life (9:29-30). He is sent to preach to the Gentiles.

22 And they gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live.

The malevolent memories of this audience have not forgotten their original purpose. They have patiently listened up to this point to Paul’s speech; but at the mention of going “unto the Gentiles,” (verse 21) they are riveted back to their original intention: to kill Paul!

23 And as they cried out, and cast off their clothes, and threw dust into the air,

The riot is back in full swing. These Jews may impatiently listen to Paul tell of his conversion, they may suffer him to tell the story of Jesus, but they will not bear the testimony that God has now included the Gentiles in His salvation. They cast off their outer garments so that they may have freedom of movement in order to stone Paul to death. Like bulls that vent their rage by pawing the dirt, this frustrated mob throws dust into the air. The tossing of dust into the air "would seem to have been a natural relief, as with other Oriental nations, to the violence of uncontrolled passion" (Plumptre 153).

Could this scene be a flash back for Paul to what must have been one of his saddest memories? On another similar occasion, the howling mob "laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen..." (7:58-59).
24 The chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, and bade that he should be examined by scourging; that he might know wherefore they cried so against him.

We can appreciate the consternation of this chief captain. It appears he is not sure what is going on. It is also certain the speech made by Paul does not fill in any of the blanks as to who Paul is and with what he should be charged. As a last resort, Lysias retreats to a tried and proven practice of whipping (scourging) in hopes he may elicit from Paul's own lips what he cannot get from the confused clamor of the crowd. It is customary to whip the one to be "examined" until a confession is literally beaten out of him.

25 And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?

And as they bound him with thongs: The Roman way of scourging was to strip the victim to the waist, stretch his arms around a column or whipping post, and tie his hands with leather thongs. Then the beating is administered with a “scourge” or leather whip whose tips often have braided into them pieces of bone or metal so that with each stroke of the whip the flesh is torn and mangled. It is generally believed that Jesus was whipped at this very post to which they are about to tie Paul (Matthew 27:26).
Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned: It is beneficial for us to update the scene for our imaginations at this point. The soldiers have taken Paul into the confines of the castle in hopes of beating a confession out of him. The frustrated Jews are left outside to howl themselves hoarse. The chief captain has retired to his quarters to wait for the scourges to loosen Paul's tongue. The centurion is about the business of seeing that Paul is bound around the whipping post when Paul, with aplomb that only he could muster under such circumstances, says, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman?"

Is it legal to scourge a Roman? It is unlawful to scourge a Roman citizen for any reason! The law even went farther than scourging; it is against the law to bind a Roman citizen with thongs because "this was the way that slaves were bound" (Plumptre 153).

26 When the centurion heard that, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest: for this man is a Roman.

27 Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea.

When the centurion learns Paul is a Roman, he goes immediately to his captain with the shocking news. We can rest assured this revelation is the source of a new concern for the chief captain. They have already violated Paul's rights as a Roman citizen when they illegally bound him with thongs. This heavy-handed treatment may be all right for normal mortals but not for a Roman! "We can admire the majesty of the law, which, in a remote province, and within the walls of a prison, could thus dash to the ground the uplifted instruments of torture under the simple declaration, I am a Roman citizen" (McGarvey, Vol. II 221-222).
Of special note is the fact that Paul's claim to be a citizen is accepted without question. No one would be foolish enough to claim citizenship falsely. To do so was a crime punishable by death.

28 And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was free born.

In the days when Rome ruled the known world, Roman citizenship was a rare prize and highly desired for the privileges it guaranteed. Paul invokes his rights as a Roman citizen for the second time, and this time spares himself the pain of the Roman whip (16:37). There were several ways in which citizenship might be attained. McGarvey supplies the following information:

Citizenship was lawfully obtained in three different ways. It was conferred by the senate for meritorious conduct; it was inherited from a father who was a citizen; and it was the birthright of one who was born in a free city; that is, a city which, for some especial service to the empire, was rewarded by granting citizenship to all born within its limits. It was unlawfully obtained by the use of money in the absence of meritorious conduct (Vol. II 221).

Lysias realizes that to be born a Roman citizen is superior to the way he has become one. It is with "a great sum" that the chief captain bribed as many government officials as necessary to have his name placed on the roll of Roman citizenship. The selling of citizenship was a form of corruption that became very common in the Roman government.
Speculation abounds about how Paul became a Roman citizen. The fact that he was born a Roman citizen indicates that his father or grandfather before him was a Roman citizen. How they became citizens is unknown.

29 Then straightway they departed from him which should have examined him: and the chief captain also was afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.

Paul’s declaration of Roman citizenship brings about an immediate reversal in the plans of these Roman soldiers. All involved in this illegal treatment of Paul are now concerned about their own fate because the penalties inflicted by Rome for violation of its citizens’ rights was sure and severe.

30 On the morrow, because he would have known the certainty wherefore he was accused of the Jews, he loosed him from his bands, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down, and set him before them.

We are made to feel sorry for the unfortunate position in which Claudius Lysias finds himself. Remembering the dilemma of Pontius Pilate (Matthew 27:22-24), it is clear that men of authority often must deal with difficult situations they would prefer to leave alone. Lysias wants to discharge his duty as the chiliarch, but he is unsure what his duty really is. He has gained no useful information from the mob. He has learned nothing from Paul’s speech. Now, he decides that since Paul “was accused of the Jews,” he will call the Jewish council (the Sanhedrin) in an attempt to get to the bottom of this matter. Unlike Pilate, this Roman chief captain is not going to be intimidated by the bloodthirsty cries of this self-righteous court of Jewish bullies.
Paul is now a Roman prisoner. This will be the case throughout the remainder of the book of Acts. From this time forward, Paul is either in a defense of his faith or he is seeking to avoid the conspiracies of the Jews to take his life.

1 And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.

Just as the penetrating look of the apostle had unmasked the "child of the devil" (13:9-10) and locked on to the "cripple" in Lystra (14:8-9), Paul now sizes up his inquisitors with an unflinching stare. Without hesitation, Paul declares "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day."

The conclusion we are brought to is that Paul has lived his entire religious life with a clear conscience toward God. Even during the time when he is the chief instigator of murder and mayhem against the Lord's people, he does so with a "good conscience."

I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth (Acts 26:9).
It is possible, even when one sincerely thinks he is right, to be wrong! Our consciences are creatures of education. For our consciences to direct us correctly, they must be taught correctly. It is not enough to be doing what "seems right" or "feels right"; we must be doing what is right according to the word of God. A person should always be willing to check to be certain that he has a "thus saith the Lord" for the things that he preaches and practices (Matthew 7:21-27).

There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death (Proverbs 16:25).

2 And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth.

It needs to be understood that this is not a formal assembly of the Sanhedrin with the high priest in charge. The Roman chief captain is in charge of this meeting, and the court members are merely standing about. Ananias shows his mean and arrogant nature by ordering that Paul be struck in the mouth.

This is not the Ananias who is called high priest in the Gospels and in Acts 4:6, but the son of Nebedaeus who was nominated by Herod, King of Chalcis, and held this office from 49-59. He was accused of rapine and cruelty by the Samaritans and in 52 had to go to Rome to defend himself. ... His order to strike Paul on the mouth is typical of the violent character of the man. The Sadducees were notorious for their arrogant manners even toward their colleagues (Lenski 928-929).
3 Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whitened wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?

Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whitened wall: Ananias has chosen the wrong man if he thinks he can abuse Paul and escape without rebuke. Just as quickly as Ananias chooses to strike Paul, Paul parries with a verbal blow that is not only a stinging rebuke but also prophetic. History declares that Ananias was later killed by his own people.

Lenski says the Greek used in Paul's reply is far more telling than the translation:

The key word is placed forward with the fullest emphasis: "Smite thee shall God, thou whitewashed wall!" literally, "God is about" to do that very thing to thee (930).

The words "whited wall" are a bold way of saying that Ananias is a hypocrite. This is the same metaphor used by Jesus when he calls the Pharisees "whited sepulchres" in Matthew 23:27.

for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law? When Ananias gives the order to "smite" Paul, he violates the very law he is supposed to be upholding. It is against the law to strike a man who has not been condemned.

4 And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest?

It was illegal to revile one of authority. Is it not interesting how this bunch of Jewish hypocrites applies the law? They recognize the illegality of reviling one of their own, but they fail to see the equal illegality of striking one who is not condemned.
5 Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.

It seems to be news to the apostle that Ananias is the high priest. Various commentators have differing explanations as to why Paul does not know Ananias is the high priest. ("Wist not" is old English for "knew not.") It has been suggested: Paul does not recognize Ananias because he is not dressed in his priestly attire. Ananias is not rightfully the high priest but has usurped the office. Paul speaks with derision in that he would not recognize such a coarse, crude man as high priest. It is most likely that Paul simply does not know Ananias by sight, and he makes a mistake that he quickly acknowledges by citing Exodus 22:28, which forbids one to "speak evil of the ruler of thy people."

6 But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.

7 And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided.

8 For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both.

Paul knows that the Sanhedrin court is divided between Sadducees and Pharisees. He uses a brilliant maneuver to remove the attention from himself and to pit these contentious factions against each other. In a bold announcement, Paul declares he is a Pharisee and reduces the charges against him to the fact that he, as a Pharisee, believes in the resurrection. Is this grand apostle not the master of the moment! This assembly of mad dogs now turns to snap and bite each other!
9 And there arose a great cry: and the scribes that were of the Pharisees' part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God.

It is always a source of amazement to see the volatile character of the Jewish Sanhedrin. One moment the enemy is Paul, a blasphemer of Moses and polluter of the temple who is not fit to "live on the earth." The next moment the enemy becomes other members of the court; and, consequently, Paul has "no evil" in him; he has become a champion!

The Pharisees take advantage of this situation not only to affirm their belief in the resurrection but also to state their belief in "spirits and angels." Both of these issues are defining differences in Pharisees and Sadducees. (For additional notes on Pharisees and Sadducees, see notes on 4:1 and 5:34.)

10 And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring him into the castle.

Claudius Lysias certainly has his hands full in his attempts to discover the true identity of and cause for the disturbances over Paul. This is the third riot in two days! We can surmise that this noble Roman soldier would have preferred to be at some far-flung Roman outpost leading his men in combat against the enemies of Rome. That prospect would certainly have been a less frustrating job than trying to baby-sit these disgusting Jews whose words and actions he does not understand.
11 And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.

The "bonds and afflictions" that have been foretold for Paul are now a reality. What could be a more appropriate time for a word of "good cheer" from the Lord himself.

For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; ... (Hebrews 4:15).

We can appreciate the grief and hopelessness Paul must have felt. "Outside the prison he could hope for nothing but death, and inside there was no field of usefulness. In whatever direction he could look, prison walls or a bloody death confronted him, and hedged his way" (McGarvey, Vol. II 228).

12 And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had slain Paul.
13 And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy.
14 And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul.

It is amazing to witness the abject moral depravity by these Jews. It is even more amazing to see this one-time high and holy Jewish court become co-conspirators in this murderous plot. These men who represent the keepers of the Law for Israel have joined this band of thugs and assassins. "More than forty" have "bound" themselves with "a great curse" to "eat nothing until they have slain Paul." Vincent says this "great curse" means they literally "anathematized or cursed themselves; invoked God's curse on themselves if they should violate their vow" (576).
In view of the moral turpitude of this band of scoundrels, it is doubtful if any of them died of self-imposed starvation!

15 Now therefore ye with the council signify to the chief captain that he bring him down unto you to morrow, as though ye would inquire something more perfectly concerning him: and we, or ever he come near, are ready to kill him.

Here is the plan. The first thing in the morning, the council will request the chief captain to bring Paul down that they may ask more questions of him. during the process of bringing Paul to the meeting, these forty desperate men will rush Paul and murder him before the Roman soldiers realize their intentions. This plan, driven by hatred, is very cleverly conceived and thought out. This murderous plot, if left unexposed, would probably have worked.

16 And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul.

Here is one of the rare and brief occasions when Luke gives us a bit of information about Paul's family. It becomes a matter of fact that Paul has a sister, and this sister has a son. These meager facts open the door for much speculation, which we are going to leave to other writers. It is unknown if this nephew of Paul is a Christian. One thing is certain: he is concerned about the welfare of his Uncle Paul.
17 Then Paul called one of the centurions unto him, and said, Bring this young man unto the chief captain: for he hath a certain thing to tell him.

18 So he took him, and brought him to the chief captain, and said, Paul the prisoner called me unto him, and prayed me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath something to say unto thee.

"Providence thwarted the plot of the conspirators in the most simple way. Providence has a way of doing that" (Lenski 945). It would have been no problem for the young nephew of Paul to gain access to his uncle. He brought with him the chilling details of the plot against Paul. How the lad learns of the conspiracy is not explained; but with so many involved in this murderous plan, it is not difficult to imagine a leak of information. What is obvious is that Paul does not want a misunderstanding of this critical message; therefore, he does not entrust the message to the centurion but rather has the centurion take the young man directly to the chief captain.

19 Then the chief captain took him by the hand, and went with him aside privately, and asked him, What is that thou hast to tell me?

The chief captain takes precautions to keep this meeting with the young man private. That this young man is most likely a youth, perhaps a teenager, is indicated by the kindly, protective way Lysias "took him by the hand."
20 And he said, The Jews have agreed to desire thee that thou wouldest bring down Paul to morrow into the council, as though they would inquire somewhat of him more perfectly.

21 But do not thou yield unto them: for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men, which have bound themselves with an oath, that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him: and now are they ready, looking for a promise from thee.

22 So the chief captain then let the young man depart, and charged him, See thou tell no man that thou hast shewed these things to me.

This young man may have been fearful of the consequences of what he is about to tell, he may have been intimidated by the presence of this Roman soldier, or he could have had a hundred other fears; but nothing hinders him from a faithful rehearsal of the plot to kill Paul. With the authority and decisiveness that must have been second nature to one of Rome's finest, the chief captain sends the young man away with instructions "tell no man."

23 And he called unto him two centurions, saying, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Caesarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night;

24 And provide them beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring him safe unto Felix the governor.

It is obvious by the size of the force assembled by Lysias, he is taking no chances with the protection of Paul. The total guard is 470 men. There are two hundred infantry, seventy cavalry, and two hundred spearmen. Vincent says spearmen "are distinguished from the heavy armed legionnaires and the cavalry. They were probably light armed troops, javelin-throwers or slingers" (578). If there is to be any blood shed in this expedition, it will be Jewish blood!
It is apparent that the chief captain feels an urgency to evacuate Paul. He instructs the centurions to leave Jerusalem by the "third hour of the night" (9:00 P.M.). This time would have been well in advance of the request of the Jews to see Paul on the "morrow."

An additional sign of the speed with which Paul is to make the trip to Caesarea is indicated by the command to "provide beasts" upon which Paul is to ride. "This has been variously understood as the need of several mounts for Paul, which would be changed from time to time on such a forced march" (Coffman 440).

A new character in this drama is introduced here: "Felix the governor." History has little good to say for Felix Marcus Antonius, a former slave who rose to power by gaining the favor of Emperor Claudius. Felix was originally the slave of Antonia, the mother of the Emperor. It was through this contact with the Emperor that he was eventually appointed governor of Judaea. The historians, almost without exception, summarize the reign of Felix with the words of Tacitus: "With savagery and lust, he exercised the powers of a king with the disposition of a slave."

25 And he wrote a letter after this manner:

26 Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix sendeth greeting.

It is customary upon sending a prisoner to a higher authority that a letter accompany the man with explanation as to the charges against him. Here, again, it is amazing that various commentators such as Reese ponder "how Luke came to know the terms of the letter" (597). Luke does not have to read a copy of this letter; Luke writes by inspiration (2 Timothy 3:16)!

(See notes on 4:16 and 7:60.)
We also learn the name of the chief captain. "Lysias" was a common Greek family name. The name "Claudius" likely was adopted in honor of the Emperor under whose reign he had become a Roman citizen.

27 This man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed of them: then came I with an army, and rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman.

28 And when I would have known the cause wherefore they accused him, I brought him forth into their council:

29 Whom I perceived to be accused of questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds.

30 And when it was told me how that the Jews laid wait for the man, I sent straightway to thee, and gave commandment to his accusers also to say before thee what they had against him. Farewell.

This is the body of the letter the chief captain sends to Felix. It is in this correspondence that this noble Roman plays politics; and as Lenski says: “Among all the Roman officers we meet in the New Testament this chiliarch makes the poorest showing” (952). In an attempt to put himself in the best light, Lysias leaves the impression that he rescued a Roman citizen from the clutches of a Jewish mob. ("... and rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman.") The truth is Lysias has Paul in chains and is ready to scourge him before he learns of his citizenship (21:33; 22:24).

It should be noted there are no charges against Paul "worthy of death or of bonds." Paul should have been set free, but corrupt and greedy Felix holds him with the hope of receiving a bribe (24:26).
31 Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul, and brought him by night to Antipatris.

With great haste, what amounts to a small Roman army rushes through the night to arrive in Antipatris. "Antipatris was about 35 miles out of Jerusalem, and 26 from Caesarea. It was rebuilt by Herod the Great, and renamed in honor of his father Antipater" (Reese 599).

32 On the morrow they left the horsemen to go with him, and returned to the castle: 33 Who, when they came to Caesarea, and delivered the epistle to the governor, presented Paul also before him.

The next day Paul is left in company of the cavalry. They deliver him to Felix at Caesarea while the foot soldiers return to Jerusalem. Paul is surely bone weary after this forced all night journey, besides another twenty-six miles by day.

34 And when the governor had read the letter, he asked of what province he was. And when he understood that he was of Cilicia; 35 I will hear thee, said he, when thine accusers are also come. And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's judgment hall.

Felix asks Paul "of what province he was." It is very important to Felix to determine whether Paul is under his jurisdiction. The governor is reluctant to involve himself in any legal harangues with the Jews; this problem can be avoided if Paul is not under the legal jurisdiction of Felix. When Paul answers that he "was of Cilicia," the question is settled: Felix is involved.
Coffman makes the following observation about "Herod's judgment hall:

Vicious criminals would not have been kept in such a palace, and therefore it may be inferred that Paul was honorably treated and given the best accommodations available for a man under detention. This was to be Paul's home for two whole years, during which Luke would canvass the cities and villages of Galilee, Judaea, Samaria, etc., preparatory to writing the Gospel of Luke (443).
Chapter 24

This chapter gives Paul a third opportunity to defend his preaching of Jesus Christ before the Jews. The Jews secure the talents of a smooth-tongued lawyer named Tertullus to flatter Governor Felix with the hope Paul will be turned over to them. Of course, Paul is no novice in the arena of debate; he is more than capable of dealing with Tertullus and Felix.

1 And after five days Ananias the high priest descended with the elders, and with a certain orator named Tertullus, who informed the governor against Paul.

And after five days: Whether this five days indicates the time since Paul left Jerusalem or indicates Paul has now been in Caesarea for five days is not clearly shown. It is most likely it has been five days since Paul left Jerusalem. This would be about the right amount of time for the Jews to figure out that Paul has escaped from Jerusalem to Caesarea and to make the trip there themselves. This relentless pursuit by these Jews will continue all the way to Rome.

Ananias the high priest descended with the elders, and with a certain orator named Tertullus, who informed the governor against Paul: Luke introduces us to a new character, "a certain orator named Tertullus." Lenski thinks Tertullus is not unlike some of the opportunistic, ambulance-chasing lawyers of today:

Ananias had employed "one Tertullus" to act as the spokesman, advocate, prosecuting attorney, when bringing charges against Paul on behalf of his clients. These lawyers seem to have been as numerous in those days as they are in ours and looked for business over the entire empire (957).
2 And when he was called forth, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying, Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence,

3 We accept it always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness.

Tertullus begins his accusations against Paul with an attempt to impress Felix with flattery. With few exceptions we are certain the "very worthy deeds" ascribed to Felix come out of the imagination of this hireling lawyer rather than from the realities of history. Remember Felix is known as the one who "ruled like a king with the character of a slave," (see notes on 23:24).

4 Notwithstanding, that I be not further tedious unto thee, I pray thee that thou wouldest hear us of thy clemency a few words.

This lawyer is earning his pay. In a skillful display of concern for the valuable time of "most noble Felix," Tertullus implies that although many more gracious words could be said, he must cut his praise short and get to the business at hand.
5 For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes:

For we have found this man a pestilent fellow: It is interesting that this noted lawyer, who will subsequently charge Paul with being a "mover of sedition," a "ring leader" of a sect, and one who would "profane the temple," begins his case by calling Paul a "pest." This is really the only charge for which the Jews can offer any proof. Paul has proved himself to be a "plague" to the Jews. Name-calling is usually a sign the accuser has no real proof and nothing stronger to use to attack his adversary. Such is the case here.

and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world: This statement is nothing but lawyer rhetoric in an attempt to inflame Felix. Can anyone believe that Paul, as zealous as he is, could have caused "sedition" ("a dissension, an insurrection") (Vine, Vol. III 336) "among ALL the Jews throughout the world!"

and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes: This is the only place in the Bible where the followers of Jesus are referred to as "sect of the Nazarenes." It is meant to be a derogatory term since the Jews despise Jesus of Nazareth. To designate the Lord's church as a "sect" is an attempt to belittle the importance of the church. We would not deny that the so-called "Christian world" is divided into many sects (heresies) or denominations, but in no sense is the church of Christ a "sect" or, for that matter, a denomination.

6 Who also hath gone about to profane the temple: whom we took, and would have judged according to our law.

Who also hath gone about to profane the temple: The original charge of "polluting" the temple (21:28) has been reduced to attempting to "profane" the temple.
whom we took, and would have judged according to our law: The insinuation is that if the
Roman chief captain had left the Jews alone they would have taken care of this problem
themselves and not have troubled "noble Felix." It appears obvious the Jews are unaware that
Felix has already been informed that Paul is a Roman citizen and that he has done nothing
worthy of "bonds or death" (23:29).

7 But the chief captain Lysias came upon us, and with great violence took him away out
of our hands,

Tertullus makes an attempt to show the Roman chief captain to be the problem in dealing with
this situation. The impression given is that all was proceeding judiciously in Paul’s arrest and
trial until Lysias interferes with the business of the Jewish court "with great violence." The truth
of the matter is the Jews “were about to kill” Paul and would have done so had it no been for
the intervention of the chief captain (21:31).

8 Commanding his accusers to come unto thee: by examining of whom thyself mayest
take knowledge of all these things, whereof we accuse him.

Tertullus has now made his case against Paul without one shred of evidence. The best he has
done is to brand Paul as a pest. This skillful lawyer uses one final tactic by telling Felix he will
find these charges to be true if he will examine Paul. Can it be that Tertullus has presented
such a powerful, airtight case that Paul will not dare to deny the charges? Tertullus may be
artful in persuading men; but if he thinks his presentation of fantasies, half-truths, and
concocted lies has intimidated the great Apostle Paul he has much to learn!
9 And the Jews also assented, saying that these things were so.

The only corroborating testimony available for the charges of Tertullus comes from the high priest and the Jewish elders. What a sad commentary when a group of religious leaders will solemnly affirm the truth of a lie.

10 Then Paul, after that the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, answered, Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself:

Notice the contrast in Paul’s opening address and the empty flattery of the opening address of Tertullus. Paul simply recognizes that Felix has had considerable experience as a judge. Lenski gives this interpretation of Paul’s statement: "Any innocent man would regard himself fortunate to have his case tried by a judge of experience in the matters at issue" (966).

11 Because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship.

12 And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city:

13 Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me.

Various scholars have tried much "day" counting in an effort to account for the twelve days mentioned by Paul. Regardless of the events of these days, the point Paul wants Felix to note is that he has been in Jerusalem only for a short time (twelve days). One would have to be busy indeed to stir up an insurrection against Rome, "profane the temple," and incite the Jews all in a matter of twelve days! Paul wants Felix to know he came to Jerusalem to worship. He did not come to Jerusalem to dispute with any man anywhere at anytime.
14 But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets:

But this I confess unto thee: Paul denies causing an insurrection. He also denies any disputation in the temple; but as to the charge of being a "ringleader of a sect," he is more than happy to confess he is a Christian, a member of the Lord's church.

that after the way which they call heresy: Paul does not confess that "the way" is a "sect"; rather he makes it plain "they call it heresy." The church as revealed in the New Testament is not a sect, division, heresy, denomination, or any other synonym that we may name that will indicate the church is a splinter from something else. "Those who hold to the true and original Scriptural teaching belong to the great body that has held this teaching through the ages; they are the church. Only those are a sect who advocate some teaching that is contrary to the Scriptures" (Lenski 970). Anyone who thinks denominationalism is of divine origin is devoid of Bible understanding and unlearned in the truth (see notes on verse 5 above and 9:2).

so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: Paul further advances his position by explaining that this "way" (Christianity) is "the way" to worship God. Not only does he declare Christianity as "the way" but also it is "the way" foreshadowed in "the law and the prophets."
This thought is further reinforced by Paul's declaration in connection with it, namely, that Christianity is the way of worshiping which is in all things according to the law of Moses and the writings of the holy prophets. Throughout all of Paul's epistles, as here, Paul never failed to present Christianity as fully identified with all the types and shadows of the OT, being in fact the fulfillment of all that was intended by everything in the old institution. Christians are the true Israel. Christ is the Prophet like unto Moses. Christ's teaching is the New Covenant. And yet the New is identified in the Old (Coffman 451).

In connecting Christianity with the Old Testament, Paul avoids another charge that could have been made. He is not preaching some new, perhaps illegal religion that the Roman government would not allow; rather this is “the way” in which he worships the same God as Israel.

15 And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.

Paul affirms he believes and entertains the same hope the Pharisees hold to, that being the "resurrection of the dead" for both the righteous and the unrighteous.

This mention of the resurrection likely runs a chill down the backs of the portion of the court who are Sadducees. But Paul will never let them forget this point of doctrine. There is more to come.
16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.

Paul steadfastly contends that when he was the chief adversary to the will of God and later when he showed himself as a loyal defender of the faith, all was done with a clear conscience. He thought he was doing the right thing. The lesson is obvious: one may be sincere and be sincerely wrong. Our conscience must be trained by the word of God if it is to be considered a reliable guide for our religious behavior (see notes on 23:1).

17 Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings.

Paul states his reason for being in Jerusalem is to bring "alms" and "offerings." Since the poor saints in Jerusalem are of Jewish background, it is correct for Paul to refer to them as "my nation."

18 Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude, nor with tumult.  
19 Who ought to have been here before thee, and object, if they had ought against me.

The reference here is to the events recorded in 21:26-28. It is not needful for Paul to explain all of the rituals of purification because Felix is knowledgeable about such Jewish customs. Paul's defense is clearly stated and easily proved. He causes neither mobs nor any uproar. It is these Asian Jews, impassioned by the sight of Paul, who prompt the tumult (see notes on 21:26-31).
Where are these Asian Jews? The fact that these Jews, who are supposed to be eyewitnesses to Paul's defamation of the temple, are not present speaks volumes. Either produce the witnesses or withdraw the charges. This is a brilliant point of defense presented by Paul. We can rest assured this Jewish court would have had their star witnesses present if they could have supplied any reliable testimony.

20 Or else let these same here say, if they have found any evil doing in me, while I stood before the council,

21 Except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day.

Paul now turns his attention upon Ananias and the elders. He challenges them to speak up if they "found any evil doing in him." One might wonder if these Sanhedrinists would like to explain to "Judge" Felix that they have already tried Paul and failed to find him guilty (23:7-9)?

Paul notes the "one voice" that caused charges to be made against him. Paul says the only charge that can be brought against him is the "one voice" of the Sadducees who consider him to have done wrong in teaching the resurrection from the dead (see notes on 23:6-8).

22 And when Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowledge of that way, he deferred them, and said, When Lysias the chief captain shall come down, I will know the uttermost of your matter.

And when Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowledge of that way: Luke states that Felix has a "more perfect knowledge of that way." Here, again, the term "way" is used to indicate Christianity. We must remember the gospel has had considerable influence in the city of Caesarea. It is here that the noble centurion Cornelius is converted (10:1). This city
is the home of the evangelist Philip and his daughters (21:8). It is not unreasonable, then, to assume that Felix has had many opportunities to have been introduced to "the way."

**he deferred them, and said, When Lysias the chief captain shall come down, I will know the uttermost of your matter:** Felix knows what he should do, but he uses a stalling tactic to put off releasing the apostle. In spite of the obvious innocence of Paul, he will remain a prisoner in Caesarea for more than two years because of the ulterior motives of this conniving governor.

23 And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul, and to let him have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister or come unto him.

It is plain Felix does not consider Paul to be the dangerous insurrectionist the Jews have made him out to be. Paul is placed under a very liberal type of house arrest; whether he is chained is a matter of discussion. Boles thinks Paul is under a type of "military arrest, where the prisoner was chained to a soldier" (385). Felix allows Paul to be indulged with liberty, the visitation of friends, and the ministrations of those who would care for him like Doctor Luke.

24 And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ.

How many days transpire before this meeting between Paul and Felix is left to speculation. We may assume curiosity, or perhaps the prompting of his "Jewess" wife to meet with Paul, motivates Felix.
Drusilla is a story within herself. In her sordid past of romance, adultery, and political intrigue, she would have made great tabloid fodder in our modern day. Bruce provides the following information:

Drusilla was the youngest daughter of Herod Agrippa I, and at this time (A.D. 57) was not yet twenty years old. As a small girl she had been betrothed to the crown prince of Commagene, in eastern Asia Minor, but the marriage did not take place, because the prospective bridegroom refused to embrace Judaism. Then her brother Agrippa II gave her in marriage to the king of Emesa, a petty state in Syria (modern Homs). But when she was still only sixteen, Felix, with the help of a Cypriote magician called Atomos, persuaded her to leave her husband and marry him. She thus became Felix's third wife, and bore him a son named Agrippa, who met his death in the eruption of Vesuvius in A.D. 79 (472-473).

We are left to wonder at what conclusions Drusilla arrives during this meeting with Paul. If Drusilla remains aligned with her blood-spattered heritage, there will be no sympathy for "the faith in Christ" as preached by Paul.

It has been remarked that her father killed James, her great-uncle Herod Antipas slew the Baptist, her great-grandfather Herod the Great murdered the babes of Bethlehem in addition to his many other murders (Lenski 979).
25 And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.

And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come: Paul's choice of a subject is calculated to strike terror in the hearts of his unrighteous, intemperate audience. For Felix, this one-time slave who now exercises the power of a king, and for this equally notorious woman who is living in open adultery as Felix's wife, the concept of righteousness, self-control, and a day of accounting is a foreign and most disagreeable subject.

Paul gives all would-be teachers and preachers of the gospel a very important lesson in the selection of the topics he preaches to Felix and his bride. Paul could have selected a subject that would not have touched on the specific sins of his audience. He could have spoken in such ambiguous terms that no one would have really known what he was talking about or to whom he was speaking. He could have given Felix a little entertaining sermonette on positive thinking. But Paul gives Felix what he needs: an expose of his sins and a warning of impending judgment. Lenski is correct in his analysis of the situation:

From Paul we may learn how to preach so as to convert. Only one blow ever goes home through the sinner's armor, and that is the blow of the law with the judgment to come delivered at the conscience with full force. Omit this, and conversion will not result (982).
Felix trembled: Albeit Felix is a very hardened, calloused man of the world; when his wicked soul is laid bare by the sharp "two edged" sword of God's word, he is afraid just like wicked king Belshazzar of Daniel's day!

Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another (Daniel 5:6).

and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee: This is the wrong answer! Felix should have yielded to his convictions, brought on by God's word: he should have obeyed the gospel.

The terror which seized him was the beginning necessary to change of life; but lust and ambition smothered the kindling fires of conscience, and he made the common excuse of alarmed but impenitent sinners to get rid of his too faithful monitor (McGarvey, Vol. II 240-241).

We must rely upon history for the final chapter in the lives of Felix and Drusilla. Soon after this event, Felix falls upon political hard times, being eventually demoted and banished to Gaul where he dies. Drusilla perishes in the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius. The "convenient season" never comes. By a rejection of the gospel, Felix and Drusilla seal their own fate. They destroy themselves.

One of the greatest tools of the devil is the promise of a "convenient season." He whispers into the ears of potential Christians, "Wait, you have plenty of time"; the scriptures admonish "Behold now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2).
26 He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him.

It appears Felix has conversations with Paul on several other occasions. The apparent motive is that Paul may offer a bribe for his release. The word "communed" indicates nothing more than the thought that Felix and Paul "talked" on a familiar basis (Vincent 583).

27 But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.

But after two years: We have little information about what occurs during the two years that Luke mentions here. "These two years of imprisonment in Caesarea, if we may judge from the silence of history, were the most inactive of Paul's career. There are no epistles which bear this date..." (McGarvey, Vol. II 242).

Porcius Festus: Luke introduces a new character in this saga of the Apostle Paul. Very little is known of the prior history of Porcius Festus, but most commentators seem to think Festus is a better man than Felix. Some even describe Festus as "honest" and "straightforward" (Boles 388). Festus is appointed governor by Nero in 59 or 60 and dies in office about two years later.

came into Felix' room: This phrase literally means Felix is succeeded by Festus. The reason for the replacement of Felix:

The occasion was a disturbance in Caesarea between Jewish and Gentile elements of the population. The actions taken by Felix were so anti-Jewish that the Jews sent a delegation to Rome in order to complain. Rome responded by removing Felix from office (Gaertner 377).
and Felix, willing to shew the Jews a pleasure: Felix shows himself to be forever the politician. The charges against Paul have not been proved. He should have been set free; but Felix, in an effort to appease the Jews and garner their favor, keeps Paul bound. Vincent gives a revealing rendering of the literal meaning of this phrase: "to lay up thanks for himself with the Jews" (583).

left Paul bound: Paul is now the charge of Porcius Festus. What fate is in store at the hands of another Roman politician will soon be seen.
In this chapter, Paul finally gets his defense on track again after what must have been a frustrating two years. Almost immediately Paul is brought before Festus. Festus would have played politics with the Jews by allowing Paul to go back to Jerusalem had it not been for Paul's demand to "stand at Caesar's judgment seat." It is in this chapter that Paul is first introduced to the local "royalty," King Agrippa and his "incestuous" sister Bernice.

1 Now when Festus was come into the province, after three days he ascended from Caesarea to Jerusalem.

Festus moves quickly to get his bearings and a feel for the politics of his new constituency. Although Caesarea is actually the headquarters for Festus, he realizes the city of Jerusalem is the capital and religious center of the Jews; thus, he wastes no time going to Jerusalem.

2 Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him,

These Jewish leaders waste no time in their seemingly endless pursuit of the Apostle Paul. Perhaps they think they can take advantage of Festus' lack of experience in office.
3 And desired favour against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him.

The utter cunning of these wily Jews is seen in this verse. In spite of the fact that it has been two years since the original confrontation with Paul, they have not abandoned their bloody plan to put Paul to death. We must wonder if the forty would-be assassins have kept their vow "not to eat nor drink till they had killed Paul" (23:12-13)? Knowing the ingenuousness of such a collection of rogues, it is doubtful if they missed a meal!

4 But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself would depart shortly thither.

If Festus granted this favor to the Jews, it would have meant certain death for Paul. Possibly there is more than one reason Festus does not send Paul back to Jerusalem, but ultimately the decision must be attributed to the providential direction of God.

5 Let them therefore, said he, which among you are able, go down with me, and accuse this man, if there be any wickedness in him.

In a reversal that seems to be an innocent change of events, the plan of the Jews is thwarted. Instead of Paul's going to Jerusalem, Felix mandates that those Jews who "are able" be invited to Caesarea to present their case against the apostle. We learn in verse 16 that it is Roman law that the accused must be allowed to answer their accusers "face to face."
6 And when he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Caesarea; and the next day sitting on the judgment seat commanded Paul to be brought.

Festus wraps up his business on his initial visit to Jerusalem and makes his way home to Caesarea. On the following day, Paul is brought to make his defense. We find Festus perched upon the judgment seat, which amounted to a seat on a raised platform that was reached by steps. This elevated seat was a symbol of authority then, even as now.

7 And when he was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove.

It quickly becomes obvious that Festus does not fully appreciate the “can of worms” he is about to open. The venomous nature of Paul's accusers is soon revealed in a libelous attack of false and baseless charges brought by the Jews.

8 While he answered for himself, Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all.

Luke does not provide the details of the Jewish charges or the details of Paul's defense but simply gives a brief summary. From the answers given by Paul, we may conclude that the charges and the defense are the same as those made before Felix in chapter twenty-four.
9 But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me?

Here Festus shows his motivation as the invertebrate politician he really is. "As the accusers were not able to prove their charges, and the prisoner pleaded not guilty to every one of them, he should have been unconditionally released; but Festus, at this point, allowed his sense of justice to be biased by his desire for popularity" (McGarvey, Vol.II 243).

Coffman makes the following succinct comment:

Paul very well knew that the incompetent Festus was no match for the temple Jews who had no intention whatever of trying Paul; all they wanted was to expose him sufficiently that their assassins could kill him; after all, it must be supposed that after two years those forty conspirators were getting pretty hungry (464).

10 Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest.

It becomes obvious that Festus lacks the intestinal fortitude to release Paul, although it is clear he is innocent. It must have been a shock to Festus’ ego that Paul refuses judgment by him. Paul realizes he cannot receive justice in the court of, as Coffman says, this "namby-pamby Festus" (465); therefore, Paul appeals to Caesar. It is likely Paul's appeal is not what Festus would have preferred. This is the first case the new governor has to deal with, and now it is being taken out of his hands with Paul's appeal to Rome. It is reasonable for Festus to fear that his Roman superiors might conclude he is unable to attend to the affairs of his governorship.
11 For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to
die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver
me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar.

Paul makes it plain he is not trying to escape punishment if he is truly guilty of a crime; but
rather he is trying to avoid being murdered for something he did not do. Paul's Roman
citizenship saves his life again. "Every Roman citizen had a right of appeal from lower
tribunals in the empire to the final court of the emperor in Rome; and once an appeal was
registered, it had the effect of stopping all further litigation and transferring the case to Rome"

12 Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed
unto Caesar? Unto Caesar thou shalt go.

The council mentioned here is not Paul's Jewish accusers but rather Festus' legal counselors.
Vincent gives the following explanation of the council:

A body of men chosen by the governor himself from the principal Romans of the
province. These were called assessors, sometimes friends, sometimes captains.
Though a Roman citizen had the right of appeal to the emperor, a certain discretion was
allowed the governors of provinces as to admitting the appeal.... In doubtful cases the
governor was bound to consult with his council, and his failure to do so exposed him to
censure (584).
The final decision of Festus and his counselors is that Paul will be allowed his appeal to Caesar. We are left to wonder what Festus' true feelings are in this matter. The phrase, "unto Caesar thou shalt go," may be a sarcastic way for Festus to let Paul know that if he thinks there is a lack of justice in Festus' court just wait until he stands before Nero. It also could be that Festus is breathing a sigh of relief to be rid of this thorny problem.

13 And after certain days king Agrippa and Bernice came unto Caesarea to salute Festus.

The visit of Agrippa and Bernice is a formal greeting from the king to welcome the new representative of Rome into office. To appreciate the character or perhaps better said, the lack of character, of this notorious pair, one might compare them to the Old Testament duo of Ahab and Jezebel. Morally speaking, Agrippa and Bernice make Ahab and Jezebel look like saints. The gross depravity and moral decadence of this brother and sister would make a modern soap opera blush. We will use the description furnished by Plumptre to supply the details:

Agrippa closes the line of the Herodian house. He was the son of the Agrippa whose tragic end is related in chapt. xii 20-23, and was but seventeen years of age at the time of his father's death, in A.D. 44. He did not succeed to the kingdom of Judea, which was placed under the government of a procurator; but on the death of his uncle Herod, the king of Chalcis, in A.D. 48, received the sovereignty of that region from Claudius, and with it the superintendence of the Temple and the nomination of the high priests. ... In A.D. 55 Nero increased his kingdom by adding some of the cities of Galilee. He lived to see the destruction of Jerusalem, and died under Trajan (A.D. 100) at the age of seventy-three.
The history of Bernice, or Berenice ... reads like a horrible romance, or a page from the chronicles of Borgias. She was the eldest daughter of Herod Agrippa I., and was married at an early age to her uncle the king of Chalcis. Alliances of this nature were common in the Herodian house, and the Herodias of the Gospels passed from an incestuous marriage to an incestuous adultery. On his death Berenice remained for some years a widow, but dark rumours began to spread that her brother Agrippa, who had succeeded to the principality of Chalcis, and who gave her, as in the instance before us, something like queenly honours, was living with her in a yet darker form of incest,... With a view to screening herself against these suspicions she persuaded Polemon, king of Cilicia, to take her as his queen, and to profess himself a convert to Judaism, as Azizus had done for her sister Drusilla (24:24) and accept circumcision. The ill-omened marriage did not prosper. The queen's unbridled passions once more gained the mastery. She left her husband, and he got rid at once of her and her religion. Her powers of fascination, however, were still great, and she knew how to profit by them in the hour of her country's ruin. Vespasian was attracted by her queenly dignity, and yet more by the magnificence of her queenly gifts. His son Titus took his place in her long list of lovers. She came as his mistress to Rome, and it was said that he had promised her marriage. This, however, was more than even the senate of the empire could tolerate, and Titus was compelled by the pressure of public opinion to dismiss her, but his grief in doing so was a matter of notoriety (164).

It is this quality of people who are the "royalty" coming to "salute" Festus and doubtless to their surprise, their black souls are about to be cut to the quick by the sharp sword that has two edges.
14 And when they had been there many days, Festus declared Paul's cause unto the king, saying, There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix:

Evidently, Agrippa and Bernice find the company of Festus most entertaining as they stay on for many days. Since Agrippa is generally considered to be an expert in the customs of the Jews, Festus takes advantage of his new royal friends to discuss the case of Paul informally.

15 About whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, desiring to have judgment against him.

Festus rehearses the case before Agrippa, emphasizing that the Jews want him to pass the death sentence on Paul.

16 To whom I answered, It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have licence to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him.

Festus presents his own version of what happened before the Jews. He leaves the impression that he, being the representative of Rome, lays the law down in no uncertain terms to the Jews. He portrays himself as Paul's savior, having prevented a grave miscarriage of justice. The truth is Festus is trying to play politics with the Jews and still deal with the formidable presence of the apostle, indeed a sticky situation for a weak-kneed politician.
17 Therefore, when they were come hither, without any delay on the morrow I sat on the judgment seat, and commanded the man to be brought forth.

Again, the impression is left by Festus that he dealt with the case against Paul in an expeditious manner. The truth is that all of this rush to judgment is an attempt to please the bloodthirsty Jews who are in a frenzy to put Paul to death.

18 Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed:

Here is an admission by Festus that Paul is innocent. Why is he not released?

19 But had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.

This verse shows Festus has not a clue about religion in general and Christianity in particular. Surely Agrippa must have suppressed a chuckle at the admission of this pretentious little governor who knows much about nothing.

Boles says the word "superstition" "as used here comes from the Greek 'deisidaimonias'... The Greeks used this word to mean 'pious,' or 'religious,' or 'superstitious'" (395) (see notes on 17:22).
20 And because I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked him whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters.

Politics again enters into Festus' account. What difference would it have made to return Paul to Jerusalem if he has already been proved innocent? If he were innocent of all charges in Caesarea, would he not have been innocent in Jerusalem? Festus wants Paul to return to Jerusalem to relieve the pressure being put upon him by the Jews. The Jews want Paul to return to Jerusalem so that they can murder him on the return trip.

21 But when Paul had appealed to be reserved unto the hearing of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Caesar.

Festus makes an effort to pat himself on the back by stating what is his legal duty to do any way. Since Paul has appealed to Caesar, Festus has no option but to send Paul to Rome.

The title "Augustus" (literally august one) is but one of many names used to distinguish the head of the Roman Empire.

Augustus was the title conferred by the senate upon Octavius Caesar, B.C. 27, whom we commonly designate Augustus Caesar. It became afterwards the distinctive title of the reigning emperor, and, after the end of the second century, sometimes of two or even three co-emperors, and was now borne by Nero (Hervey 252).
22 Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. To morrow, said he, thou shalt hear him.

In view of the sordid past of the Herod family, of which Agrippa and Bernice are members, it is no surprise they might have a morbid curiosity about Paul and his teaching about Jesus Christ. It was their great-grandfather who had attempted to kill Jesus as a baby by having the infants of Judaea slaughtered (Matthew 2:16). It was their father who had James the apostle executed (12:2). It was their uncle who had John the Baptist killed (Matthew 14:6-8).

Jesus has prophesied that Paul would "bear" His name before "kings" (9:15). The scene is now set for Paul to preach to the King. There is yet another bit of irony attached to this occurrence: it was some thirteen years earlier, in this same city (Caesarea), that Herod Agrippa I, the father of King Agrippa and Bernice, was smitten by "the angel of the Lord, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost" (12:23).

23 And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains, and principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment Paul was brought forth.

And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp: From the description given by Luke, this interview with Paul has turned into quite an event. Vine defines "pomp" as being a "show or display" (Vol. III 192). With the addition of the word "great," we can only imagine the degree of regal display that is taking place. These wayward children of Herod seem to have the same bent for royal apparel and a pompous attitude that made their father a meal for the worms (12:21-23).
and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains: The chief captains are the chiliarchs of the Roman army. Each of these men commands a thousand Roman soldiers (see notes on 21:31).

and principal men of the city: These principal men are the social and business leaders of the city. Luke lets us know that anyone who is anybody is in attendance.

at Festus' commandment Paul was brought forth: Luke, forever the man of few words, briefly sets the stage and then leaves us to guess at the affect the appearance of Paul has on this circus atmosphere. Lenski aids our imaginations with the following information:

This sentence is a masterpiece in its description of the scene. It depicts how the stage is gradually set, one brilliant and impressive entrance is made after another, the king and his sister with their retinue come in great pomp, then others, visitors perhaps are also present to congratulate Festus on his accession to the procuratorship, Festus, too, of course, has not only his five chiliarchs in gala uniform but also the men of highest prominence in the city--all these are presented in their most pompous array and display. What an assemblage! The great stage is set. Festus gives the order. Then follow two simple words without a modifier, which are in striking contrast with the long preamble of genitive absolutes: "there was brought in Paul." For him, for this humble apostle of Jesus Christ, for this lone, poor prisoner, this magnificent assembly of royalty, of rule, of military rank, of highest civil prominence has been arranged. Thus do imperial and royal courts assemble in all their splendor, and when the grand climax arrives, the portals swing open, and the emperor or king enters. Yes, all eyes were riveted on Paul. All had come in grand attire in order to hear this man (1012-1013).
Without question the greatest man present is the Apostle Paul. Without the need for "pomp" or regal attire, perhaps even being led in chains (26:29), this humble man of God steals the show.

24 And Festus said, King Agrippa, and all men which are here present with us, ye see this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me, both at Jerusalem, and also here, crying that he ought not to live any longer.

Festus' introduction of Paul to Agrippa seems to imply a certain amount of incredulity in its tone. Festus is saying, “Look at this man. Can you believe that because of him the multitude of the Jews both in Jerusalem and also here (Caesarea) are in total pandemonium? They clamor for his blood.”

25 But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself hath appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him.

Festus gives the impression he is about ready to acquit and release Paul when Paul makes his appeal to Augustus. The truth is that if Paul had not appealed to Caesar the Jewish zealots would have poured out his blood on the dusty road back to Jerusalem.

26 Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and specially before thee, O king Agrippa, that, after examination had, I might have somewhat to write.

Festus is in a predicament. He expresses a real need before those assembled and "specially" King Agrippa for help in establishing charges against Paul. It would be unheard of to send a prisoner to Caesar without a reason for sending him. Festus dares not tell the truth: that he is too gutless to release him even after finding him innocent, or that Paul has withstood him when
he attempts to get him to go up to Jerusalem and be "judged" of the Jews. Festus hopes someone can supply some reason to send Paul to "my lord."

"My Lord" is yet another title used to designate the Roman Caesars. This title has a religious connotation, indicating some of the Roman emperors considered themselves as god. This bloated ego created a type of emperor worship. "Many Christians became martyrs for refusing to utter this deifying title in worship of the emperor" (Lenski 1018). “Augustus and Tiberius had refused to let anyone address them with such a title, but Caligula and Nero permitted such an address, and even gloried in this title” (Boles 398).

27 For it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not withal to signify the crimes laid against him.

Festus must be the crown prince of understatement. "Unreasonable" is mild compared to the reality of sending a prisoner to a pompous Caesar who thinks he is god, with no specific reason for sending him. This is not only "unreasonable," but for Festus it would probably be fatal!

With no "crimes to lay against" Paul, Festus yields the floor to his esteemed guest, King Agrippa, in hopes of producing some new facts that may be presented to Caesar. Agrippa immediately invites Paul to "speak for thyself" (26:1).
Chapter 26

This chapter chronicles what must have been a most exciting day for the Apostle Paul. This day holds the prospect of converting a king! Once again Paul gives the details of his life, including his conversion, and then he makes an appeal to Agrippa to follow his lead and become a Christian himself.

1 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself:

Festus has turned the control of these proceedings over to Agrippa, who desires to get to the heart of the controversy by allowing Paul to speak in his own defense.

Paul steps up to begin his fifth defense. With a distinctive sweep of his hand, Paul begins his narrative. This motion of the hand, so characteristic of Paul, must have been a compelling gesture that quiets the crowd and demands their attention. At least Luke is so impressed by this gesture that he mentions it on numerous occasions (13:16; 21:40).

2 I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews:

"Happy" indeed! Paul must have been thrilled with the opportunity to preach the gospel to this young Jewish king and his sister. These two represent the Herods, a lineage of rulers who have made every effort to destroy Christianity (see notes on 25:22).
It should be noted that Paul has already been found innocent of any crimes against Rome (25:25); therefore, his only problem is the accusations of the Jews.

3 Especially because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently.

This statement that Paul recognizes Agrippa as "expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews" is not intended as mere flattery but rather a recognition that Agrippa is knowledgeable ("Literally, a knower") (Vincent 586) of the Law. "Agrippa had been brought up in the Jewish faith, and on this account had been entrusted by the emperor with the oversight of religious affairs in Jerusalem, while Judea was under Roman procurators" (McGarvey, Vol. II, 250). Unlike dealing with pagans such as Felix and Festus to whom all Jewish customs are new and strange, Paul now speaks to one who knows and understands the Jews.

4 My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews;

This verse reminds us that Paul (Saul of Tarsus) gained a notable reputation as a young Jewish scholar and later as a zealous persecutor of the church. This reputation is likely to have been known by Agrippa.

5 Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.

It is apparent that some of Paul's most bitter enemies are those who have known him from his youth. We can understand the utter resentment of these former friends; they look upon him as a traitor to the Jewish faith.
The "sect of the Pharisee" is the "straitest" of all the Jewish sects. Synonymous with the word "straitest" are such words as most rigid, strictest, and as Vine says, "the superlative degree of accurate or exact" (Vol. IV 79). (For additional information on Pharisee, see notes on 5:34.)

6 And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers:

7 Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope’s sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews.

Free from the need to defend himself for offenses against Rome, Paul launches into the preaching of the gospel of Christ. He reminds Agrippa of the hope held by the Jews pertaining to the coming of a Messiah, a promised Savior coming to redeem fallen mankind from sin. Paul's logic is this: Why am I being "accused" by the Jews for preaching a "hope" long looked forward to by all Jews ("our twelve tribes")?

I am being accused by Jews, O king! The very thing is almost incredible although, alas, true. Think of it. "Jews" are accusing one of their own race for holding to the hope that has ever lifted their nation above paganism (Lenski 1029)!

8 Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?

Here Paul attempts to rally Agrippa to his side by mention of the resurrection of the dead. Paul gives Agrippa's faith in the resurrection credibility before this audience of pagans by clarifying that the king is not hearing anything incredible, nor is his belief some new "superstition"; rather Agrippa is holding to the supreme hope of all Israel. We must remember it is the sect of the Sadducees who deny the resurrection. It is also the Sadducees who have been largely responsible for the pursuit and persecution of Paul (see notes on 4:1 and 23:6-7).
9 I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

Paul claims yet a closer alliance with Agrippa when he admits that, in spite of a clear conscience, he had at one time rigorously persecuted the cause of Jesus. McGarvey gives the following interpretation of the statement:

... this information must have caused Agrippa to say within himself: Why, the man was once on the same side with my family, and he showed the same zeal to suppress the cause of the Nazarene as did my father, my uncle, and my grandfather. It was intended to have this effect, and also to start within the astonished young man the question: How did this persecutor come to undergo so great a change (Vol. II 252-253)?

For the benefit of all today, we see by Paul’s admission that it is possible to be religious, to have a clear conscience, to feel right about it, and still to be so very wrong. "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12). One should always be willing to check "the way" that he is in. (For additional notes on conscience, see 23:1.)

10 Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them.

It must have been difficult for the apostle to use the term "saints" in reference to the brethren he is guilty of persecuting (see notes on 9:13).
There is considerable discussion as to the meaning of the statement, "I gave my voice (vote) against them." Various scholars think this statement indicates Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin. This possibility opens up additional speculation that as a member of this court Paul would have been by necessity a married man. This writer agrees with Barnes, Lenski, and McGarvey that Paul was not a member of the Sanhedrin. Rather he was given the "authority and commission" (26:12) by this court to represent them in the binding and murder of the "saints" (see notes on 9:2; 22:4-5).

11 And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.

Paul continues to recite details of his rabid attack upon Christians. He "compelled" these poor saints to “blaspheme” the name of Jesus. Whether Paul was successful in getting these "saints" to revile Jesus as their Lord and Savior is left to speculation. It would make this extreme persecution all right if we could believe it involved only the loss of life and not the loss of a single soul.

By the mention of "strange cities," it becomes evident that Paul's murderous fervor was not confined to the cities of Jerusalem and Damascus. His madness knew no bounds.
12 Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests,
13 At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.
14 And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.
15 And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.
16 But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;

Even the casual reader can feel the raw emotions felt by Paul as he recounts this event that happened years before, yet is as fresh on his memory as yesterday. The authenticity of this happening is confirmed by the fact that this is the third time the event has been rehearsed; and, with the exception of incidental bits of information, the account is exactly the same (for more detail, see notes on 9:2-6; 22:5-10).

17 Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,

This is the promise Jesus makes to Paul that he will protect him from the dangers threatened by the people (the Jews) and from the threats of the Gentiles. This promise of providential care surely buoyed the courage of Paul throughout his hazardous career. Simply put, it is the will of God to preserve the life of Paul until his work is finished.
18 To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

The events leading up to and the results of Paul's own conversion have been noted; now he states his mission: to turn men from their sins.

**To open their eyes:** This is the first necessity for the gospel preacher: to make men aware of the jeopardy in which sin has placed them.

**and to turn them from darkness to light:** Secondly, the preacher must call those who have become used to the dark "into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

**and from the power of Satan unto God:** Thirdly, the preacher must inspire the sinner to break loose from the grasp of Satan and turn to God.

**that they may receive forgiveness of sins:** The ultimate goal of the gospel preacher is to cause sinful men to turn from their sinful condition and, through obedience to God, "receive forgiveness of sins."

**and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me:** Eternal life in the bliss of heaven is the inheritance promised to those "which are sanctified by faith" in Jesus. The reader need not make the mistake many in the denominational world have made by believing this verse teaches salvation by "faith only." This verse teaches no more than the fact that the "remission of sins" is available only to those who find the means of this remission through faith in Jesus Christ. (For details on salvation by faith, see notes on 10:43.)
19 Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:

This is Paul's way of expressing the idea, "O king would you expect that I would be disobedient to a heavenly vision?

20 But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.

Paul states he has worked to carry out the purpose for which he was converted and the mission given him by the heavenly vision. He is careful to state that he went first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles. Paul's message calls for faith in Jesus, repentance from sins, obedience to baptism, and the continuation of living a holy life.

21 For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me.

Paul has made a masterful presentation of his case. There is no doubt that at least Agrippa gets the point of Paul's reasoning: In his ministry Paul is carrying out the direct instruction of God. If the Jews oppose him in this divine work, they are the ones in the wrong.

22 Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come:

It is the obvious intention of God to preserve the life of Paul until he has accomplished the goals set forth for him. God's providence is seen repeatedly in Paul's many deliverances from harm (see verse 17). Lenski agrees:
It was due to the help of God alone that those Jews did not accomplish what they tried, to murder Paul. ... Since these foes were thirsting for Paul's blood, he would have perished if he had been left alone (1045).

Paul lays the responsibility for his violent and illegal arrest upon the Jews with the explanation that he was only obeying God by preaching that Jesus, the promised Messiah, had come as Moses and the prophets had prophesied He would.

23 That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.

Moses and the prophets had foretold the coming of Christ: that He would suffer and die and that He would rise from the dead (Psalm 22; Isaiah 53). The very purpose of this suffering Saviour was that He might be the "light of the world" (John 8:12).

It should be noted that Jesus is the "first" to rise from the dead in the sense that He is the first to have power over death. Those raised from the dead in both the Old Testament and the New Testament die again with one wonderful exception: Jesus!

24 And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.

Poor ignorant, pagan Festus has all of this talk of rising from the dead that he can stand. We can guess that the intensity of Paul's presentation, the ring of conviction, and the undeniable truth thus presented lie heavily upon this entire audience; but it is Festus who, with an uncontrollable burst of pent-up energy, calls a halt to a proceeding that his carnal mind does
not understand. "Festus had advertised his ignorance at the beginning of the hearing; but in this interruption, he headlined it" (Coffman 484).

Festus accuses Paul of being "mad" because of his "much learning." "Mad is from the Greek 'mainei,' which means 'raving’” (Boles 408). This type of accusation is not confined to the preachers of the first century; those lacking in spiritual discernment today are still prone to "raving" if they come up short on a scriptural response.

25 But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.

Festus loses his composure in the heat of the moment but not so with the apostle. With a grace of character that comes from a close relationship with Jesus Christ, Paul, in a quiet, respectful voice, denies the charge of "most noble Festus."

26 For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner.

Paul continues his artful persuasion of Agrippa by once again calling upon him as a witness. Paul knows Agrippa is aware of the things he has taught. The events surrounding the life, trial, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus are well known by the Jews, especially one of the status of King Agrippa. "These things were not done in a corner."

The earthquake which accompanied the Son of God in his visitation of our planet is still sending shock waves around the earth. The fact of his birth split human history into B.C. and A.D.; his crucifixion bruised the head of Satan himself; his resurrection brought
life and immortality to light through the gospel; his teachings monitor the deeds and thoughts of all men; and his word shall judge the living and the dead at the Last Day. Done in a corner? Yes, in a little corner of the universe known as the Planet Earth; but that earth can never forget him, or get rid of him (Coffman 484-485).

27 King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.

Paul has reached the point in his sermon where the truth has been presented, objections have been answered, and now it is time to call for obedience. Anyone who has had much experience in attempting to win souls has been at this point; the moment of decision has arrived. The next move is left to the prospect for salvation. Paul's question leaves Agrippa in a dilemma. If he answers in the affirmative, it is certain his pagan friends will ridicule him; and yet Agrippa must have given some clue that he is at the point of being convicted by the word of God. At least this seems to have been the impression gained by Paul. Paul knows that Agrippa "believed the prophets."

28 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.

There is much discussion among scholars as to the meaning of the phrase, "almost thou persuadest me." The Greek will not support this translation. "En oligio' does not mean 'almost,' but it is not clear as to what it does mean" (Boles 409). There are two possibilities: the phrase could indicate "time," as "in a little time," or it could mean "effort" as "with little effort." Thus, Agrippa is saying, "In short time or with little effort you are persuading me to become a Christian." There are others who believe the statement, made by Agrippa, can be disregarded altogether because it is spoken in sarcasm or derision. We were not there to hear the tone or the inflections in the voice of Agrippa, but there is no reason to believe Agrippa is
showing contempt for the words of Paul. To the contrary, the next verse will show that Paul at least thinks there is a possibility for the conversion of Agrippa.

Although we have no record that Agrippa ever did become a Christian, the thoughts expressed in this verse indicate he knows more about the gospel of Christ than many so-called Christians do today. Look at what Agrippa knows:

1. Agrippa is a "believer" as verified by Paul; yet Agrippa knows he is not a Christian. Being a believer only will not save anyone.

2. When Agrippa says "thou persuadest," it shows he knows the apostle is doing the persuading. Many today think to become a Christian they must be persuaded by a visitation of the Holy Spirit, some better-felt-than-told experience, or a small still voice.

3. When Agrippa says "persuadest me," he knows Paul is attempting to persuade him to become a Christian. Paul is not persuading God to save him. Many today believe it is necessary to persuade God to save them; hence, we have the sinner's prayer, prayer benches, and "praying through" in an effort to beg God to save them.

4. When Agrippa says "to become," he knows what he is then will have to change. He has to become something else. Many today think God will save them without a change in their lives.
5. When Agrippa says "a Christian," he knows Paul is persuading him to become a disciple of Christ, pure and simple. Today men want us to become denominational, nondenominational, un-denominational. They want us to be an "ist," an "ic" or an "ism." What is wrong with just being a Christian?

(For addition notes on the name “Christian”, see 11:26.)

29 And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.

This verse verifies the fact that Paul sees some glimmer of hope for the conversion of Agrippa. Whether it takes little or much time, little or much effort, it is Paul's prayer that Agrippa and everyone else in the assembly will become a Christian as he is, except for his bonds. Paul is in bonds, perhaps even in chains as he speaks, but Paul's bonds are only physical; Agrippa and his heathen cronies are in the bonds of ignorance, sin, and eternal death.

30 And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them:

31 And when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds.

32 Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar.

The pregnant moment has passed: the meeting is over: Agrippa has avoided a direct answer to Paul's invitation. It is back to business as usual. What is to be done with Paul? He is obviously innocent of all charges; but because of his successful appeal to Caesar, Paul is soon to be on ship, bound for Rome.
We are left to wonder how many times this Jewish king rehearses the events of this dramatic audience with the Apostle Paul. Surely he never forgets Paul's force of conviction as he preaches Jesus the crucified and risen Savior in a way that he instinctively knows is the truth. Agrippa must now face the eternal horror of standing in judgment, “almost a Christian!”
Following is one of the most exciting adventure stories a person could expect from any type of literature. This record is unlike any other recorded in all of divine writ. It is a fascinating story of ships, winds and waves, catastrophic storms, and shipwreck. The most amazing aspect of this account is that it is absolutely true! One would have to have a most active imagination to have conceived such a series of events. Luke provides us with such details about this ancient sea voyage that even the most critical of Bible scholars find no quarrel with it. Aside from realizing the primary objective is transporting Paul to appear before Caesar, let us enjoy the sheer excitement, the picturesque vocabulary, and the pulse pounding terror as seen through the eyes of Dr. Luke.

1 And when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto one named Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band.

And when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul: The pronoun "they" has reference to Agrippa and Festus. At long last Paul is delivered to Roman authorities to make the journey to Rome.

and certain other prisoners: From scriptures we cannot determine the identity of these other prisoners. Lenski suggests, "The other prisoners were not other Romans who had made an appeal to Caesar but men condemned to death, who were to be sent to Rome for the gladiatorial shows, to die in these for the amusement of the Roman populace" (1061).
unto one named Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band: Paul is placed in the safekeeping of a centurion by the name of Julius. These Roman captains are spoken of in a very favorable light in the New Testament, and this writer has come to appreciate the Roman centurions. With minor exceptions they are shown to be men of character and courage (see notes on 10:1; 21:31; 24:23). "Augustus' band" is a name given to a division of soldiers, in this case in honor of Caesar Augustus.

2 And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia; one Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us.

And entering into a ship of Adramyttium: The city of Adramyttium is still in existence today. It is known as Adramyti and is located in the modern country of Turkey. Reese says, "Adramyttium was a town on the coast of Mysia, opposite the island of Lesbos. It was an important ship-building center in the first century, and probably the ship's home port" (640).

we launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia: This ship is what is commonly called a coasting vessel. It makes stops at various ports along the province of Asia. It is very similar to the one Paul and his associates used on their trip to Jerusalem.

one Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us: It appears from the little information provided that Aristarchus, like Luke, is one of Paul's closest friends and attendants (see notes on 19:29).
3 And the next day we touched at Sidon. And Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave him liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself.

And the next day we touched at Sidon: It is generally agreed that the ship initially sails from Caesarea. The port city of Sidon is about seventy miles north of Caesarea. It is here the ship makes its first stop.

And Julius courteously entreated Paul: The kindness and respect afforded Paul by the centurion Julius shows well the magnanimous character of one of Rome's finest. "Courteously" is used only here in the New Testament. It means literally, "in a man-loving way; humanely; kindly" (Vincent 590).

It is also worthwhile to note the effect Paul has upon the men with whom he deals. It is evident Paul, by his conduct and manner of life, favorably impresses those with whom he comes in contact. Paul is respectful as well as respectable (see also 18:14; 19:31-37).

and gave him liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself: This passage mentions one of the wonderful "perks" of being part of the family of God. Paul is allowed to debark in the city of Sidon, and there he is met by brothers and sisters in Christ who love him and care about his welfare. His friends provide for his needs. This attention given Paul, for the benefit of anyone who may have forgotten, is called "hospitality."
4 And when we had launched from thence, we sailed under Cyprus, because the winds were contrary.
5 And when we had sailed over the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia.

At this point in our study, it is necessary to understand some of the problems the ancient sailors encounter in their efforts to sail the Mediterranean Sea. The summer months are the ideal time to sail as the prevailing winds favor the sailor, but in the winter months the prevailing winds are out of the west-northwest, thus forcing the small ships out into the open sea for which they are not equipped. The time of this voyage is late August or early September at the very end of the good sailing season. Rome lies to the west, and these "contrary" winds are blowing from the west, so these small ships are forced to sail north, taking advantage of staying near the land as much as possible. Using Cyprus as a windbreak, Paul's ship makes its way northward toward the city of Myra.

One of the chief towns of Lycia, it lay where the coast forms a slight bay just before it turns north as the west face of Asia Minor, bordering the Aegean or, as we say, the Grecian Archipelago... The old name is still known, though the Turks call it Dembre; but its present squalor contrasts painfully with the splendour of the ruins which speak of what it was under the Romans (De Welt 326).

(For notes on Pamphylia, see 13:13.)
6 And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing into Italy; and he put us therein.

It is the purpose of Julius to find a larger ship to continue the trip to Rome. Passage for Paul and company is secured on a "ship of Alexandria" that is in the process of hauling a load of corn (wheat) to Italy. These grain ships were huge compared to the coasters that plied the waters of the Mediterranean. Boles gives the following information:

This ship was from Alexandria in North Africa; it was bound directly for Italy with a cargo of wheat on board and two hundred seventy-six passengers. It is thought to have been one of the fleet of grain ships in use to carry wheat from Egypt to Italy. ... This rig was specially favorable for running with the wind, but they could sail within seven points of the wind; they could make about seven knots an hour. A "knot" is a nautical mile, or 6,085 feet; hence, it would sail about 8.5 miles. These merchant ships were very large and could carry ten or eleven tons ... (414-415).

There is speculation that this ship of Alexandria is having the same problem as the ship of Adramyttium, that being the contrary winds have blown even this great ship off course.

7 And when we had sailed slowly many days, and scarce were come over against Cnidus, the wind not suffering us, we sailed under Crete, over against Salmone;

It is with great difficulty that this large, heavily loaded vessel makes painfully slow progress against contrary winds. Trying to sail west against a strong westerly wind is not only difficult to comprehend for one who is a non-sailor, but it is difficult to accomplish by one who is an experienced sailor.
The distance between Myra and Cnidus is about 130 miles. This leg of the trip probably took two or three weeks because of the strong winds.

At Cnidus the ship takes a southerly turn. Instead of trying to sail on the north side of Crete (a large island off the coast of Greece), it passes Crete on the south side, thus using the island as a much-needed windbreak.

Salmone "was the name of the promontory which formed the eastern extremity of the island of Crete" (Barnes 530). These first century sailors, who do most of their navigation without the benefit of sophisticated instruments, use this high point of land as a landmark.

8 And, hardly passing it, came unto a place which is called The fair havens; nigh whereunto was the city of Lasea.

It is with great difficulty that the sailors are able to navigate along the west side of Salmone without being forced into the shore by the westerly winds. Finally, the ship sails around the eastern end of Crete and edges along the south side of the island, using it for a windbreak to avoid being driven out to sea. About halfway down the island, they arrive at an inlet called "The fair havens." "Fair havens was nothing more than a small bay. In fact, the nearest town was two hours' walk to the east, called Lasea" (Reese 644).
9 Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished them,

It is now very apparent that the favorable wind for which they have waited is not coming. The time for sailing the Mediterranean is past. "The Mediterranean was not safe for ancient vessels after September 15 until about March 15" (Coffman 495). The question to be decided is whether to stay the winter at "The fair havens" or sail a bit farther down the coast to a more "commodious" harbor on the southwest end of Crete called Phenice (verse 12).

The mention of the "fast" being already past allows us to determine the time of these events. McGarvey says, "The fast here mentioned is the Jewish fast on the day of atonement, which was the tenth day of the seventh Jewish month (Lev. xxiii. 26, 27), and it occurs usually within our month of October" (Vol. II 264).

10 And said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives.

Here, once again, the centurion in charge of this voyage recognizes the wisdom and knowledge of the apostle and allows his opinion about traveling to Phenice to be expressed. Paul warns of impending disaster, which will include the loss of the ship, its cargo, and perhaps the lives of those aboard.
11 Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul.

It is only natural that the centurion would pay more attention to the word of the "master" [captain or "literally the steersman" (Vincent 592)] and the "owner of the ship." After all, the former is an experienced seaman and has the most to lose.

12 And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice, and there to winter; which is an haven of Crete, and lieth toward the south west and north west.

By this record it seems the sailors and perhaps other passengers ("the more part") are allowed to express their opinions on the decision, and the conclusion is to make the trip to Phenice. After all, it is a journey of only about forty miles and the creature comforts afforded by the accommodations at Phenice far exceed the Spartan existence at fair havens. This decision is probably not difficult for the sailors, "if wintered at Fair Havens, in all probability they would have spent a sober and chaste sojourn, there having been very little chance of anything else" (Coffman 495).

13 And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, loosing thence, they sailed close by Crete.

Finally, the day comes when the dangerous west wind ceases and a deceptively gentle south wind arises to entice this doomed ship into the jaws of "Euroclydon." Such is the joy of the change in sailing conditions that the sailors quickly hoist anchor and cast their fate to the wind, thinking they have gained the "commodious" haven of Phenice.
14 But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon.

As the ship sails along the southern edge of Crete in high expectation of arriving at Phenice, a major obstacle arises. We can now appreciate one of the dangers of sailing the Mediterranean in the winter. A mighty tempest that literally seizes the ship is so familiar to ancient sailors they have given it a name, Euroclydon. This name describes a wind of typhoon proportions that roars down over Crete from the northeast catching Paul's ship and sweeping it out to sea.

15 And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive.

The ship, its crew, and its passengers are at the mercy of the wind. The wind is so violent the ship cannot face into it. Vincent says the term literally is the ship "could not look the wind in the eye" (593). The only recourse is to lower the sails to prevent their destruction and hope the ship will simply be able to ride out the storm.

16 And running under a certain island which is called Claudia, we had much work to come by the boat:

The ship receives a temporary reprieve when the winds drive it behind a small island named Claudia. This island is about twenty miles southwest of Crete. We can only imagine the frenzy of all aboard to take advantage of this momentary opportunity to improve their situation. The first problem is to bring aboard the dinghy that is customarily towed behind the ship. This small boat is used to make trips to land when necessary. Luke includes himself in the "much work to come by the boat" when he uses the word "we."
17 Which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and, fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, strake sail, and so were driven.

After securing the dinghy on board, the next order of business is to "bandage the ship," as Luke, forever the physician, says. This “undergirding” involves wrapping the ship with chains or ropes ("helps") in an effort to keep the ship's timbers from separating in heavy seas.

In modern times this is called “frapping” a vessel, referring to the passing of cables around the exterior of the hull to give it greater strength and keep it from breaking up during a storm. All ancient sailing vessels carried supplies for such a purpose" (Coffman 497).

The crew fears being grounded upon quicksand. Quicksand is but one of many hazards that a ship, out of control, faces. Barnes supplies the following information:

There were two celebrated "syrtes," or quicksands, on the coast of Africa, called the greater and lesser. They were vast beds of sand driven up by the sea, and constantly shifting their position, so that they could not know certainly where the danger was, and guard against it. As they were constantly changing their position, they could not be accurately laid down in a chart. They were afraid, therefore, that they should be driven on one of those banks of sand and thus lost (531).

In Conybeare and Howson's The Life and Epistles of Saint Paul, there is some excellent material on the verses under consideration, beginning on page 697.
18 And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship;

The second step, in an attempt to avoid disaster, is to lighten the ship. This action involves throwing overboard the cargo and any other articles deemed unnecessary. It should be noticed that even under such dire prospects as being swamped by thundering waves or being torn apart by the fierce winds or even being washed aground on ever-shifting quick sands, not all of the precious wheat is jettisoned (verse 38).

19 And the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship.

The hope of surviving the storm encourages a joint effort by all on board to further lighten the ship. Every loose item, every dispensable fixture on the ship, is thrown overboard. Such things as chairs, beds, all types of furniture, canons and shot (if the ship is so equipped), auxiliary sails, and anchors, are all cast into the sea.

20 And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away.

This verse supplies another peril faced by these ancient mariners: the loss of hope. It is difficult to imagine the fatigue, the unabated terror, the depressing darkness, and the despair of the constant prospect of death in the sea. There is no means to determine the ship’s location in this seemingly endless night of rain and clouds. These first century sailors depend upon sighting the sun and the stars for direction.
21 But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss.

But after long abstinence: It is easy to understand that during the struggle to withstand the onslaught of the storm the passengers and crew have no appetite for food. Hervey explains that Dr. Luke uses yet another medical term to describe the situation:

*Asititia* is only found here in the Bible; but it was the common medical term for loss of the appetite, and such is the natural rendering here. ... The literal rendering is, when there was a great (or general) loss of appetite among the crew. The terror, the discomfort, the sea-sickness, the constant pressure of danger and labour, the difficulty of cooking, the unpalatableness of the food, combined to take away relish of their food, and they became weak for want of nourishment (296).

Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss: It is not the purpose of Paul to say "I told you so," (surely it is a temptation) but to remind them of the correctness of his information and to prepare them to pay attention to his next instructions.

22 And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship.

We can believe that after the events already suffered and the dismal prospects for the future, Paul's new prediction must have been extremely good news for the storm-weary occupants of this ship.
23 For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve,

While the others have been fighting for their lives, Paul has been praying to the Master of the winds and waves; and he has been answered. What a wonderful thing to imagine: in the midst of what appears as certain disaster, "the angel of God stood by me this night." We have no reason not to believe that God cares about His children and their trials in the wicked age in which we live and that He will stand by them in time of need. (For additional notes on the "Angel of the Lord," see 5:19; 7:30; 12:7-10).

Paul gives us another lesson here. He never misses an opportunity to confess the one true and living God before unbelievers. He reminds them of the "God whose I am and whom I serve."

24 Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.

25 Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.

26 Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island.

Because of Paul's presence on this ship, all can "fear not". Although it is not stated, we can assume Paul has been praying for the preservation of the lives of all on board the ship. By the grace of God and because of Paul's request, all aboard will be saved.

Paul invites his fellow travelers to rejoice because he is confident in his faith in God that the message delivered will be "even as it was told me." Paul will have his audience before Caesar. Their safety is assured!
27 But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria, about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country;

But when the fourteenth night was come: What an ordeal this has been! For fourteen nights this hapless band of travelers, bound together by circumstance, have been at the mercy of the winds and waves in an ancient ship without the aid of modern navigational equipment. Surely these first century mariners were made of sterner stuff than their modern counterparts.

as we were driven up and down: Some commentators have accused Luke of error here; but those who understand the nature of a hurricane know that winds come from opposite directions, depending upon the location of the eye of the storm.

in Adria: Vincent says that "Adria" has reference to "The Adriatic Sea: embracing all that part of the Mediterranean lying south of Italy, east of Sicily, and west of Greece" (595).

about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country: Sailors have several ways of sensing the presence of land. It is said that a person can "smell" land; but that is not the case here as the wind is blowing from the ship toward the land. It is likely these sailors could hear, over the howl of the storm, the waves breaking upon the rocks.

28 And sounded, and found it twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms.

And sounded: The ominous sound of the breakers out in the blackness of the midnight holds an invisible terror for all aboard. This scene would have been a nightmare if it were taking place in broad daylight, but imagine the compounding of the horror by the pitch-blackness of the rolling waters and stormy night.
Suspecting imminent calamity, the sailors move quickly to determine the depth of the sea by "sounding." Sounding is accomplished by dropping a weight, usually made of lead, attached to a rope, overboard. Usually the rope has knots in it one fathom apart.

_and found it twenty fathoms:_ This first sounding indicates a depth under the ship of about 120 feet. A fathom is calculated to be about six feet as Plumptre explains:

> The Greek noun so rendered was defined as the length of the outstretched arms from hand to hand, including the chest. It was reckoned as equal to four cubits ... about six feet (175).

_and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms:_ A short time later, the depth is "sounded" again and found to be ninety feet. This is a loss of thirty feet, thus indicating a rapid approach toward the land.

> 29 Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day.

The rapid loss of water depth sounds an alarm in the minds of the sailors. In an attempt to prevent being dashed upon the rocks, four anchors are cast out of the ship. With a jolt the anchors hold, the ship is jerked to a halt, and there is nothing else that can be done but to pray for the light of day.
To "cast anchor and wait for day" can be used as an analogy for many of the trials of our modern day. How many times do we find ourselves physically and mentally exhausted, having used up our reserves to combat some calamity in our own lives when all that is left is to hold on to what we have and pray to God for a better day?

30 And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under colour as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship,

During this time of jeopardy, the need for self-preservation overcomes the sailors. They devise a treacherous plan to save themselves regardless of the consequences for the passengers. Under the guise of lowering additional anchors, they lower the lifeboat with the intention of abandoning the ship.

The term "under colour" means "under a pretense." Vine says: "It signifies the assuming of something so as to disguise one's real motives" (Vol. I 197).

31 Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.

32 Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off.

We have a contrast in the matter of faith. The sailors have no confidence in Paul's prediction (verse 22), but the Romans are just the opposite. They demonstrate their complete faith in the words of Paul by cutting the ropes that hold the lifeboat and letting it fall from the side of the ship. The conclusion of this unique situation is now left in the hands of God.
33 And while the day was coming on, Paul besought them all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing.

34 Wherefore I pray you to take some meat: for this is for your health: for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you.

Paul's natural leadership ability rises to the occasion. In the middle of what has amounted to chaos, Paul calms and assures this ill-fated group that all is well. He encourages them to eat something for their "health" and to take heart, “for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you.”

35 And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat.

36 Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat.

Things are definitely looking up. It is dawning toward a much-prayed-for day; finally the opportunity comes for something to eat, and Paul has given them the promise that no one will be lost. Spirits are lifted by this new-found hope.

Again, an opportunity is provided for Paul to introduce the God of the universe to this motley crew. He pauses in the circumstances of the day to thank God before them all. We may assume this prayer does not just involve thanks for the food but praises God and gives Him credit for their deliverance.
37 And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls.

Why Luke specifies the exact number of souls aboard the ship is left to speculation. Perhaps the number is given to help us appreciate the magnitude of the rescue that is about to occur. What power could preserve every single life of such a great number cast into a raging sea? This amazing avoidance of otherwise certain calamity is provided by the grace of God.

38 And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea.

When all appetites are satisfied, activity is renewed in an effort to save the ship. All remaining cargo is cast into the sea. This is a final effort to lighten the ship so that it will sail higher in the water in hope of avoiding treacherous rocks.

39 And when it was day, they knew not the land: but they discovered a certain creek with a shore, into the which they were minded, if it were possible, to thrust in the ship.

And when it was day: Only those who have ever prayed for the dawning of day can appreciate the immense relief that the rising of the sun can bring.

they knew not the land: but they discovered a certain creek with a shore: As these weary sailors strain to see through the pale light of a new day, they do not recognize the land in sight; but they do see a bay with a beach. It is usually where a creek empties into the sea that the soil washes down from the land, building up a sand bar or beach. It is here, by the providence of God, that the ship will be run aground. This geographic location is known today as St. Paul's Bay.
into the which they were minded, if it were possible, to thrust in the ship: The wisdom of preventing the sailors from leaving the ship now becomes apparent. It requires the skill of these experienced sailors to sail this crippled ship to land.

40 And when they had taken up the anchors, they committed themselves unto the sea, and loosed the rudder bands, and hoised up the mainsail to the wind, and made toward shore.

The commitment is made to sail for land. Anchors are lifted, the rudders are loosed for steering, and the sail is hoisted. There is no turning back!

Lenski provides technical information about this race for shore:

Ancient vessels had no hinged rudder but had two long oarlike rudders, one on each side of the stern. The two were often operated together by being joined by cross bars. ... At that moment, too, the foresail was hoisted to the blow of the wind. ... Thus "were they holding for the beach," the foresail and the rudders controlling the vessel so as to head in the direction desired (1094-1095).

41 And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the forepart stuck fast, and remained unmoveable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves.

The sailors do not know that the sand bar extends farther out into the mouth of the bay than expected. The result is the ship runs aground on the submerged bar a short distance before they reach the beach. The front end of the ship lodges upon the sand bar, and the rear of the ship is literally torn off by the howling gale as it is whipped from side to side.
Luke uses the term "where two seas met" to describe the location. The submerged sand bar with deep water on each side is quite literally, a strip of underwater land with a sea on each side.

42 And the soldiers’ counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape.

This is Roman law: rather than allow a prisoner to escape he must be killed. The alternative is if the guard in charge of a prisoner allows the prisoner to escape, the guard is put to death. To be responsible for these first-century Christians certainly made life difficult for some jailers and guards (see notes on 12:19 and 16:27).

43 But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from their purpose; and commanded that they which could swim should cast themselves first into the sea, and get to land:

Considering the consequences, we can understand why the soldiers are concerned about prisoners escaping. The centurion orders all soldiers who can swim to throw themselves into the water and swim for land. This is to insure there will be guards on land when the prisoners get there. Once again, Paul is saved by the intervention of a Roman captain.

44 And the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land.

It is everyone for himself; but this massive struggle is not as chaotic nor life-threatening as it may appear. The hand of God is upon this scene, and not one soul will perish!

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble (Psalms 46:1).
Paul's prophecy is brought to pass. All the passengers escape the ship to be delivered safely to the island referred to as Melita. In the next few verses, we will again be made witness to the miraculous abilities of Paul as he deals with a venomous serpent and the healing of assorted maladies. Then it is on to Paul's inevitable destiny: an appointment with Caesar.

1 And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita.

Although the ship is lost, being grounded upon a sand bar and subsequently being torn apart (27:41), all those aboard safely reach the land. The island is called Melita. Barnes provides the following:

The island is now called Malta. It was celebrated formerly for producing large quantities of honey, and is supposed to have been called Melita from the Greek word signifying honey. It is about twenty miles in length from east to west, and twelve miles in breadth from north to south, ... It is about sixty miles from the coast of Sicily (534).

2 And the barbarous people shewed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold.

And the barbarous people: The word "barbarous" used here "means neither savages not barbarous people. In the language of the day mankind was made up of three groups of people: Jews, Greeks, and barbarians. All who did not speak Greek but native languages were termed `barbarians' in the sense of foreign people" (Lenski 1098).
shewed us no little kindness for they kindled a fire, and received us every one: Luke, never one to waste words, is saying these hospitable natives show them great kindness. It should be remembered this company involves some 276 persons (27:37). Luke emphasizes the fact that they "received us every one." It certainly would have been no small job to build a fire big enough to provide a measure of comfort for such a number.

because of the present rain, and because of the cold: One can almost feel the discomfort of the survivors. They are soaked to the skin from the sea and the cold autumn rain. A warm fire would certainly cheer the body and elevate the spirit.

3 And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand.

Luke allows us another glance at the character of the Apostle Paul. Paul is not like many of the soft-handed, coiffured clergy of today who prefer not to get their hands dirty. He is gathering wood to add to the fire. Surely the survivors realize Paul is someone special by now, but that does not prevent him from working as everyone else is.

During the process of gathering wood, Paul inadvertently picks up a venomous snake that bites him. The snake fastens his fangs into Paul's hand.
4 And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live.

Upon seeing the snake bite Paul after his escape from the hazards of the sea, the natives conclude Paul must be guilty of murder for which the "gods" will not allow him to escape justice.

5 And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm.

6 Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god.

Here is another place in scripture where the scoffers, mockers, and nay sayers jump up to say, "There is no wood or poisonous vipers on the island of Malta; thus, this Bible account is false." Others will say, “The snake did not really bite Paul but merely coiled around his hand.” Lenski says, "Take the miracle out of this record and a pointless story is left" (1100). The truth of the matter is the snake does bite Paul, and the natives of the island are not mistaken about the identification of a deadly danger with which they have to contend on a daily basis. It may be true that there is no wood or deadly snakes on Malta now ("The population density of Malta is now over 1200 people to the square mile") (Hervey 319), but the event under consideration occurred almost two thousand years ago!

How fickle is the mind of man. How easily can come the reversal of one's fortune. One day the crowd cries, "Hosanna to the Son of David" (Matthew 21:9), and a few days later the same crowd cries, "Let Him be crucified" (Matthew 27:23). Paul, thought to be a murderer a few minutes before, is now hailed as a god.
As a tangent, we cannot pass a humorous conclusion reached by Coffman:

People who are impressed with efforts to impose humane methods of killing rattlesnakes in Texas should take note of this. Burning the viper alive appeared to Paul as a suitable form of extermination; and none of the people who had to contend with such reptiles complained of it (509).

7 In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously.

Luke introduces us to a new character by the name of Publius. This "chief man of the island" shows his compassion for these hapless travelers by stepping up and taking charge of their needs and accommodations in a most friendly way.

8 And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him.

The rewards of the hospitality of Publius are quickly seen in the mercies of God being poured out upon his stricken father.

Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares (Hebrews 13:2).

Publius' father has fever and dysentery. Dr. Luke uses these two words together with the professionalism of a physician to diagnose the man's malady. This ailment was and still is common and can be deadly because of the dehydration of the patient.
For all the scoffers who would explain away all the miracles of the Bible, we have a professional diagnosis of a significant disease and a miraculous cure.

For our modern day "faith healing" charlatans, take note: there is no requirement on the father of Publius to "have faith"; the cure is instant and complete; no one leaves this "healing meeting" disappointed (see notes on 4:30; 3:16).

9 So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed:

Luke records that many enjoy the benefits of the healing powers of Paul. It must also be assumed, although not mentioned by Luke, that the gospel is preached. The primary purpose of miracles is to confirm the word of God (4:30; 8:17; 14:3). For the people of Melita, it is truly a physical and spiritual windfall to have the "tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon" dash the ship containing the Apostle Paul upon their shore.

10 Who also honoured us with many honours; and when we departed, they laded us with such things as were necessary.

Who also honoured us with many honours: It would not be in keeping with the tenor of divine scripture to assume that the people of Melita "paid" Paul for their miraculous healing with "gifts" (Matthew 10:8). "The word (honours) was applied to payments for professional services, and that fact may have influenced Luke in selecting it; but it is evidently not used in that sense here" (Vincent 599). The "honours" under consideration here involved the utmost respect, highest esteem, and greatest appreciation that can be shown to Paul for the wonderful blessings that his presence has brought to these people. Who can estimate the everlasting
impact the great apostle brought to the lives of these people? How many former pagans now stand shoulder-to-shoulder with Paul and Luke as brothers and sisters in Christ?

**and when we departed, they laded us with such things as were necessary:** The people of Melita supply Paul and company the necessities to continue their trip. The fact that there is a distinction made between gifts put on board ship and the "honours" given Paul further indicates no material payment is made for miraculous blessings.

11 And after three months we departed in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle, whose sign was Castor and Pollux.

After a three-month layover, waiting for a change in the weather, it is determined to continue the trip to Rome. Again, a government grain ship from Alexanderia, much like the ill-fated vessel that brought them to Melita, has wintered on the island and is available to continue the trip.

The Twin Brothers, whose wooden images, stand at the bow or stern, constituted her sign, or, as we would say in modern phraseology, her name, were Castor and Pollux, the two fabled sons of Jupiter who were the special guardians of sailors (McGarvey, Vol. II 279).

12 And landing at Syracuse, we tarried there three days.

Syracuse is a town on the eastern coast of the island of Sicily. It is about eighty miles from Melita, a trip of less than twenty-four hours. Unger says the city was "founded about 735 B.C. and was very prosperous" (1055). What happens during the three days at Syracuse is left to our imagination.
13 And from thence we fetched a compass, and came to Rhegium: and after one day the south wind blew, and we came the next day to Puteoli:

Since the port of Rhegium lies about seventy miles to the north of Syracuse and the wind is blowing from the north, it is necessary to employ a method of sailing that is called "tacking." By zigzagging back and forth, the ship is able to sail into the wind. The term "fetched a compass" indicates this type of sailing "in a circuitous route" (Plumtre 179).

Rhegium is now the modern Italian town of Reggio. It is located on the very "toe" of the boot-shaped Italian peninsula.

The following day a more favorable wind from the south arises, and the journey is completed to Puteoli.

Puteoli was a regular port of entry for the fleet of grain ships operating between Rome and Egypt, and was in those days a seaport of great importance. Just eight miles NW of Naples, it was the greatest port in Italy. The large pier had twenty-five arches, of which thirteen ruined ones remain (Coffman 512).

14 Where we found brethren, and were desired to tarry with them seven days: and so we went toward Rome.

It is not surprising that Paul finds brethren waiting for him in Puteoli. One of the true "perks" of being a child of God is in being a part of the Christian family here on earth. It is a blessing indeed to enjoy the company of brothers and sisters in Christ who truly love you and have a real concern about your welfare.
There is considerable speculation as to the reason for remaining in Puteoli for seven days. There is much credibility in the conclusion that Paul and company tarry in order to observe the Lord's supper with the brethren before pushing on to Rome. Would the Roman centurion have allowed for such a delay? It is quite possible that Julius is a Christian himself by this time; and, at the very least, who could deny the one who has saved the whole party from the brink of death such a small request? Coffman says:

Thus Paul and his party would be with the Christians at the Lord's table on the Lord's Day, as they had been at Troas (20:6,7) and at Tyre (21:4). There can hardly be any doubt that all three instances of these seven-day periods of waiting were caused by the apostle Paul's arrival on a Monday, in each case, and that a week's delay was necessary to afford the opportunity of taking the Lord's supper on the Lord's Day (513).

After what must have been a week of both spiritual and physical refreshment for Paul, the fateful journey resumes. With a certain inevitable conclusion awaiting some 150 miles ahead, Paul walks with determination and singleness of heart up the Appian Way, the world's most modern highway. This ambassador of Christ has an appointment to plead the case for Jesus Christ, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, before the incarnation of unbridled heathenism, Nero, Caesar of Imperial Rome!

15 And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii forum, and The three taverns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage.

Paul is refreshed again and encouraged by the support of his brethren. Some brethren from Rome travel about forty miles to "Appii forum" to meet Paul while others travel about thirty miles to "The three taverns."
Both appii forum and The three taverns are small wayside stops established to take advantage of the large amount of traffic up and down the Appian Way. Much like our "Quick Stops" along major highways of today, these places provide food, drink, and overnight provisions for travelers.

16 And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him.

The more notorious prisoners bound to Rome for crimes such as robbery and murder are turned over to the proper guards for incarceration and later punishment while Paul is allowed a type of house arrest. He takes up residence in a rented house (verse 30). "Here again the question of Paul's undeniable financial ability comes to mind, but we have no certain solution. Luke may very well have been wealthy; or Paul himself, ... might have inherited wealth" (Coffman 520). It is certain that Paul has many rich and generous brethren who visit him in Rome, as well as gifts he receives from the Philippians by way of Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25; 4:10-14). Whatever the means, the cause of Jesus does not suffer for lack of material support.

The only restraint taken on Paul is the "mild form of custodia militaris" (Lenski 1112). This type of custody involves the assigning of a Roman guard who is literally chained to Paul, thus Paul's reference to "this chain" in verse 20. What begins as a mundane duty for these guards turns into the opportunity of a lifetime. In their efforts to constrain Paul, they learn the "words of life," which can forever free them from the bonds of sin and save their souls.
The soldier guard was changed at regular intervals so that during the space of two years Paul became acquainted with many of these men. Phil. 1:13 shows that the impression made upon these men was far-reaching. While Paul was confined to his dwelling, many kept coming to him daily, which enabled him to keep on testifying, and each soldier guard heard everything that was said during his hours on duty, to say nothing about the conversations which Paul had with such individual guards (Lenski 1112).

17 And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together: and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans.

It is quite interesting that in spite of the rejection and persecution he suffers at the hands of the Jews, Paul always makes an appeal to them first. It seems he never gives up on the concept "to the Jew first" (Romans 1:16). Here, once again, Paul reaffirms he is innocent of any and all charges against him; yet, because of the Jews, he stands to give answer in the courts of the Romans.

18 Who, when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me.

19 But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar; not that I had ought to accuse my nation of.

Paul explains that the Romans (25:24-25; 26:32) "would have let me go"; but because of the Jews, he is a Roman prisoner.
20 For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.

What a wonderful introduction Paul has made to these Jews in Rome. He has made neither accusations nor harsh charges; rather he explains that because he bears the "hope of Israel" he is chained to this Roman soldier. We can be sure these Jews do not yet understand the "hope of Israel" to which Paul refers, but they are soon to learn.

21 And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judaea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came shewed or spake any harm of thee.

This verse holds a certain amount of intrigue. Can we really believe that this tightknit Jewish hierarchy has not received notice of the actions of the famous Apostle Paul? The Jews of Judaea have certainly had enough time to get word to their Roman brothers. As Coffman says, "If they had wished to press charges, Paul's three months delay after the shipwreck gave them plenty of time to have crawled to Rome..." (516). What reasons can there be for this lack of follow-up on the charges against Paul? Following is a summation provided by Bruce that may answer some of these questions:

The answer of the Jewish leaders to Paul is a model of diplomacy. They denied all knowledge of his case; no visitor or letter had come from Jerusalem about him, they assured him. This might be thought surprising enough, but we cannot say confidently that it cannot be true. The leaders of the Sanhedrin may have realized that if they could not proceed successfully against Paul before provincial magistrates, there was still less chance of a successful prosecution in Rome. A year or two later they might have been more hopeful; Poppaea Sabina, whom Nero married in A.D. 62, was very friendly to Jews; Josephus, indeed, goes so far as to call her a God-fearer. But, in view of the
regular communication between Rome and the East, we should have expected the Roman Jews to have some inkling of the trouble that had arisen over Paul; we may bear in mind, however, that under the present circumstances they would be anxious not to be associated with the prosecution of a Roman citizen who had secured a favourable hearing from Festus and Agrippa and was now to be heard by the emperor. They wished, in fact, to have as little to do as possible either with Paul or with his Christianity (530-531).

22 But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against.

The disingenuousness of the Roman Jews is made even more apparent with the statement made in this verse. Can it be that they know nothing of Christianity except that it is "this sect" held in universal disdain?

But we may be quite sure that they had quite an extensive experience of Christianity in Rome itself. When the Christian community in Rome came into being is a matter of conjecture, but when Paul wrote his epistle to the Roman church early in A.D. 57 it was already a well-established church and its Christian faith and loyalty were renowned throughout all the churches (Romans 1:8). It may well have been one of the earliest churches to be founded outside Palestine, and we have seen ground for believing that ten years before Paul's arrival the advance of the gospel in the Jewish community at Rome led to riots which brought imperial displeasure upon the community. But on this occasion the leaders of the community judged it politic not to commit themselves on the subject—at any rate not until they heard Paul's account of himself and the message to which he had dedicated his life (Bruce 531).
We would add that the Lord’s church is not a sect in the sense that it is a split or schism off the old Jewish religion as the Jews regard it. Rather Christianity is a far superior successor to the Jewish religion (Hebrews 8:6-13). The Old Covenant predicts the coming of the Messiah; the New Covenant confirms Jesus as that promised Messiah (Hebrews 10:1-10). We will carry this one step further by affirming the Lord’s church is not a sect, neither is it a denomination.

23 And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening.

On the day of this marathon study, "from morning till evening," Paul's rented house is filled to capacity with the Jewish leadership from Rome. We can only imagine the careful presentation made by Paul. All loose ends must be tied; every effort must be made to answer the questions that are sure to arise in the minds of these contentious Jews. Paul labors to expound the word of God. Vine says the word "expound" means "to set out" or "to expose" (Vol. II 63). As solemnly predicted by Jesus, Paul is "bearing witness in Rome" (23:11).

The expression "Moses and the prophets" is a common way to refer to the entire Old Testament.

For a detailed explanation on the "kingdom of God," see notes on 8:12.

24 And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.

Luke certainly wastes no words on his assessment of the results of Paul's efforts. As is always the case when the gospel is presented, some believe it while others reject it.
25 And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, 26 Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: 27 For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

At the close of the day and apparently also at the close of Paul's efforts to expound God's word, there appears to have been many animated and perhaps loud discussions among the Jews. Paul surely is exhausted and frustrated in his struggle with unbelief and prejudice; yet he gives his audience one last thought to ponder.  
As a final thought, Paul quotes this passage from Isaiah 6:9-10. The point is a reminder that the same self-imposed blindness that caused the Jews to reject Jesus is now causing them to reject the gospel. It is not the fact that the Jews cannot hear but rather that they will not. It is not that they cannot see but that they "closed their eyes." They can also understand, but they choose not to.

It might be beneficial to make a modern application. The Jews were satisfied with their religion to the point that they were unwilling to listen to anything else. Today there are untold thousands who also have a self-imposed blindness because they are satisfied with their religion or lack of it. They are unwilling to "try" what they believe against the word of God. They choose not to see, hear, and understand the gospel.

Jesus also uses this passage from Isaiah, quoted here by Paul, in reference to the Jews in Matthew 13:14-15; Mark 4:12; and John 12:38-41.
It should also be noticed that the Holy Spirit spoke the will of God through Isaiah the prophet. Lenski makes the following comment:

He names "the Holy Spirit" as though the Jews knew this Third Person of the Godhead fully. They did. The Old Testament revealed the Trinity. In the days of the Baptist we find no Jew objecting to the Three Persons. The Jews have not yet become Unitarian (1126-1127).

**28 Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it.**

**29 And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves.**

This is the final rejection of the gospel by the Jews. Paul boldly declares, "the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it." This statement likely supplies us with the "one word" referred to in verse 25 that serves to disperse the Jews. That "one word" is the word "Gentile." It is the word "Gentile" that signals the end of Paul's speech before the mob at the temple in 22:22. It is totally inconceivable to the Jewish mind that God will show any religious favor to these heathen nations derisively known as the Gentiles. No one word can so quickly prejudice the Jewish mind and incite frenzy like the word "Gentile."

We have reached a major milestone in the book of Acts. The gospel has reached the end of the original restriction "first to the Jews" (Romans 1:16). Now the apostle, in the same spirit that he deals with the blasphemous Jews in Antioch in Pisidia, says: "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (13:46).
30 And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him,
31 Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.

It is with these last two verses that we bring to a close this dramatic narrative of the preaching of the gospel in the first century. Luke informs us that for a total of "two whole years" Paul is allowed the unobstructed opportunity to preach and teach the glorious "kingdom of God." (See notes on "teaching and preaching" in 15:35 and notes on the "kingdom of God" in 8:12.)
Conclusion

It is with a certain sadness that we close this study, which has been so inspiring. We have watched through the divinely inspired words of Dr. Luke the cause of the only begotten Son of God rise from a thrilling beginning on Pentecost Day (2:1) to a crescendo that "turned the world upside down" (17:6). We are left here, one might say, at the end of the road. What is going to be the ending to this amazing saga of human devotion to a divine calling? The human mind is really not happy without an ending. The human mind wants to know: "What happens to the Apostle Paul? Is he released to make a trip to Crete or perhaps even Spain as some would say? Does he get his audience before Caesar? Do the Romans execute him by beheading? Is his head cut off with a sword? An axe?"

The truth of the matter is this is all the evidence we have. It is futile to overwork our imaginations with groundless assumptions. And really what finally happens to the physical existence of this great apostle is not important. From a spiritual standpoint, what is important is revealed. We leave this great man of God doing what he is called to do, "preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ."

Is there any way that our questions will ever be answered? Oh, yes, there is a way. By the grace of God, we can look forward to taking up again the company of the apostle along with the saved of all ages on the other side of death, beyond the resurrection morning, in the splendors of an eternity in heaven.
I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and NOT TO ME ONLY, but unto ALL THEM also that love his appearing (2 Timothy 4:7,8).
Sources Used in the Commentary


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